



A Supplemental Guide to

Foster Home Licensing



NC Division of Social Services
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section
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FROM THE DIVISION'S FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES SECTION

Rhoda Ammons	Bob Hensley	Joanne Scaturro
Rita Bland	Meisha Hines-Jones	Angelina Spencer
Steve Elledge	Harry Maney	Linda Waite
Tara Foster	Gayle Poole	Teresa Turner

FROM THE JORDAN INSTITUTE FOR FAMILIES, UNC-CHAPEL HILL SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Mellicent O'Brien Blythe	John McMahon
--------------------------	--------------

MEMBERS OF THIS GUIDE'S ADVISORY PANEL

Phyllis Crain <i>Crossnore Academy</i>	Marie Montague <i>Durham County DSS</i>
Stacey Darbee <i>NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Assoc.</i>	Jenifer Montsinger <i>Orange County DSS</i>
Alison Ferguson <i>Yahweh Center</i>	Kim Morgan <i>Children's Home</i>
Regina Freeman <i>Gaston County DSS</i>	Jeanne Preisler <i>Omni Visions Inc.</i>
Chris Jernigan <i>South Mountain Children's Homes</i>	Carroll Sue Priddy <i>Grandfather Home for Children</i>
Carla Mallinson <i>Rowan County DSS</i>	Catherine Sutton <i>Meridian Behavioral Health Services</i>
Connie Maney-Cain <i>Eliada Homes</i>	Julie Steinbeck <i>New Hanover County DSS</i>
Alvina McCallop <i>Omni Visions Inc.</i>	Bobbi Vance <i>Henderson County DSS</i>
Katrina McMasters <i>Guilford County DSS</i>	

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Introduction

If you are a North Carolina foster care licensing professional or you supervise a North Carolina foster care licensing professional, this guide is for you. Developed by the NC Division of Social Services and the Jordan Institute for Families, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, this guide has one simple goal: to help licensing social workers succeed.

Whether you're a novice or a seasoned veteran, we believe you'll find this guide has a lot to offer. If you're new, you'll probably want to keep it within easy reach for a while. Why? Because it presents essential information about the rules, walks you through all the major licensing actions, and puts you on the road to mastering the many complex tasks and interactions of licensing.

But wait—there's more. This guide also describes the whys, wherefores, and unwritten rules of successful licensing practice. In these pages you'll encounter explanations of the “big picture” thinking behind the little details in North Carolina's licensing procedures. You'll also find suggestions for preventing and responding to placement disruption and a host of other critical practice issues.

One of the reasons we're so sure this guide will meet your needs is that we developed it using input from a panel of licensing professionals from public and private agencies, the Division's licensing staff, faculty from the Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, and hundreds of North Carolina's foster parents. Collectively these experts have hundreds of years of experience with licensing and foster care. They shared their wisdom with us for one reason: to help you negotiate the licensing process and ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in foster care.

This Guide Aims to Help Licensing Professionals . . .

- **Ensure children receive safe, stable, and nurturing foster care placements.** This is the ultimate purpose of all licensing work.
- **Find, understand, and correctly implement licensing rules and standards.**
- **Make the connection between the rules and the philosophy behind them,** including the idea that the safety of the child (and of everyone else) is our first concern and the notion that the use of family-centered practice can benefit all families, including foster families.
- **Use the 12 skills to enhance the safety and well-being of children.** All North Carolina foster families receive training that promotes partnership and teaches 12 skills used in successful fostering and adopting. Assessing and enhancing foster parents' use of these skills is an essential, ongoing task of licensing professionals.

How to Use This Guide

You don't have to read this guide from cover to cover. However, as a first step we strongly recommend that you sit down and read the first two chapters (they're short!). We also urge you to read Chapter 8, "Critical Practice Issues," BEFORE you're facing disruption, allegations of maltreatment in a foster home, or another crisis; this will help you avert disaster and develop a plan for how to respond if things take a turn for the worse.

Quick Search. If you are in a hurry and know what you're looking for you can do a quick search of this document. In Adobe Acrobat, select "Edit" from the menu bar at the top, then select "Search." Type the term you are looking for in the field provided and view the search results. Often "less is more" with these types of searches. For example, if you are looking for information about use of the DSS-5015 for initial licensure, it would be best to search the term "5015" and then browse through the search results for the information you want, rather than entering in a more complex search term.

Icons Used in This Guide



Watch for these short highlights of essential learning points.



This owl signifies empirical evidence that serves as the basis of many recommendations and practice tips.



This icon points you to resources for learning more.

You Can Always Call Us!

The staff members at the Licensing Authority are part of the team serving children and families. If, after consulting this guide, you have questions about anything that has to do with foster care licensing, please contact us for guidance or consultation: 828/669-3388 (NC Division of Social Services, Regulatory and Licensing Services, 952 Old U. S. 70 Highway, Black Mountain, NC 28711).

To Leave a Message with the Licensing Authority

Good communication is important in the relationship between licensing professionals and the Licensing Authority. Please use the following as a guide when leaving messages.

- Speak your name and phone number slowly and clearly
- Provide area code with phone number
- If checking status of application:
 - Give proper name of foster parents
 - Indicate whether it is for family foster care or therapeutic foster care
 - Give county of family residence
 - Provide facility ID number if already licensed
- Leaving question on message is helpful
- Please refresh our memory if we've previously discussed this family / issue

CHAPTER 1

THE BASICS

In This Chapter

- What Is Foster Care Licensing?
 - Why We License Foster Homes
 - The Legal Foundation of Licensing
 - An Expanded Concept of Child Safety
 - Who's Who in Licensing
 - Two Types of Licenses
-

What Is Foster Care Licensing?

Within North Carolina's foster care system, licensing refers to the process of selecting and approving the families who will care for children. Unless otherwise specified by a court order, children in the custody and placement authority of a county DSS must be in foster homes licensed by the state or in court-approved placements.

1. The Licensing Process

The licensing process has three steps. These steps do not have to occur in any particular order. In fact, they often occur at the same time.

- A. Initial Screening/Application.** The components of this step are explained in detail in Chapter 3.
- B. Home Study.** During this step:
 - A residential study is completed with the family to determine if the dwelling meets standards. This process ensures children are placed in safe, suitable homes.
 - A family assessment is completed through a mutual selection process that determines whether the family possesses or can develop the characteristics and strengths needed to provide adequate care for a child.
- c. Decision.** The three key decisions made in the licensing process are as follows: (1) the family decides whether to foster, (2) the Supervising Agency decides whether to accept the family as a foster family, and (3) the Licensing Authority decides to approve or disapprove the Supervising Agency's application on behalf of the family.

The entire initial licensing process typically takes three to six months to complete, depending on the schedule and availability of training classes, the family's motivation, and the presence or absence of any hindrances to licensing.

Why We License Foster Homes

For the Children. Because they have been abused and neglected, children placed in foster care sometimes have needs and maladaptive behaviors that other children don't. In their review of the literature, Stukes-Chippingu and Bent-Goodley (2004) found the following about the well-being of children in foster care:

- Many exhibit emotional and/or behavioral problems
- Many are educationally at risk
- They are particularly at risk in the areas of social and life skills

We also know that children in foster care are more likely than children in the general population to have a lasting or recurring health problem.



Children in foster care need and deserve temporary caretakers who understand their situation and who can meet their individual needs.

Children placed in foster care need and deserve temporary caretakers who understand their situation and who can meet their individual needs. Licensing is one way to ensure that foster families are up to the task of caring for these children.

For Birth Families. Although the parents of children in foster care have been temporarily deprived of custody, they have a right to expect that the care being provided to their children is at least equal to the care that they themselves would provide. Licensing ensures that foster parents have met certain minimum criteria in training and other areas.

For Foster Parents. The licensing process ensures that foster parents know about the risks and rewards involved in fostering, receive basic information needed to care for children in foster care, and make an informed choice about whether to foster. Licensing helps assure that foster families and the agency have a working partnership that is centered on building on the strengths and meeting the needs of children and families.

For the Child-Placing Agency. In North Carolina the ultimate legal and moral responsibility for ensuring the safety, well-being, and permanence of a child in foster care rests with the county DSS that has custody of that child. If the child is being cared for through a contract with a private agency, the private agency has legal and moral responsibilities as well. Licensing is a way to make sure that these parties are legally protected and working as a team to live up to their responsibilities to families and children.

The Legal Foundation of Licensing

The responsibility for the licensure of family foster homes and therapeutic foster homes in North Carolina currently lies with the Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section of the Division of Social Services, Department of Health and Human Services (see NC General Statute 131D-10, <<http://www.ncga.state.nc.us>>).



North Carolina's licensure standards reflect the absolute minimum child-placing agencies must do; it is the Division's hope that child-placing agencies will build upon this baseline to raise standards and improve the care provided to children.

North Carolina's licensure standards reflect the absolute minimum child-placing agencies must do to ensure basic protection of children in out-of-home care. It is the Division's hope that child-placing agencies will build upon this baseline to raise standards for foster homes and improve the care provided to children.

To provide family foster care or therapeutic foster care in North Carolina, the family in question must demonstrate compliance with minimum licensure standards. Once a license has been issued it must be maintained; licensing professionals must make sure foster parents have the support and information they need to maintain their licenses,

An Expanded Concept of Child Safety

Virtually everyone in the field of child welfare cares about children. However, traditionally our focus in foster care has been on the physical safety of children, with much less emphasis on their well-being.

Given the fact that some children spend years in foster care, this approach has been criticized as less than adequate. To address the situation, in 1997 Congress passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which calls upon child welfare agencies to pay attention not just to safety, but to ensuring the permanence and well-being of children as well. This increased emphasis on permanence and well-being is reflected in the reviews the federal government conducts in all 50 states, and in the child and family services reviews that the Division of Social Services conducts biennially with North Carolina's 100 county departments of social services (DSS agencies).

It is in this context that the Division strongly encourages the state's child-placing agencies to embrace an expanded concept of child safety. Instead of seeing safety as the absence of physical threats or risk factors, we should use our assessments and interventions with children in foster care to ensure we are providing everything they need to develop to their fullest potential.



We should use our assessments and interventions with children in foster care to ensure we are providing everything they need to develop to their fullest potential.

Because foster parents are their primary partners when it comes to nurturing these children and keeping them safe, agencies must do all they can to carefully screen, select, and continually support and assess foster parents. Child-placing agencies' most valuable "tool" for working with foster parents is the **quality of the relationship** between the agency and each foster family. Licensing professionals play a central role in this relationship.

All North Carolina foster parents are taught 12 essential parenting skills as part of their pre-service training. North Carolina strongly believes that when these skills are applied appropriately and consistently, the safety and well-being of children truly improves. Chapter 3 of this guide discusses ways licensing professionals can use the 12 skills to assess and support foster parents in an ongoing way.

Other useful tools for ensuring the quality of foster homes include MAPP/GPS, the foster parent pre-service, and other foster parent training. (MAPP/GPS, which stands for *Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting-Group Preparation and Selection*, is North Carolina's recommended pre-service training for foster and adoptive parents.) To learn more about foster parent training, see Chapter 10, "Training 101," and visit the Division of Social Services' training web site <www.ncswtrain.org>.

Who's Who in Licensing

In North Carolina we take a team approach to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being for children in foster care. At a minimum, this team consists of the following members.

1. Licensing Authority

The Licensing Authority for family foster homes and therapeutic foster homes is the North Carolina Division of Social Services, Department of Health and Human Services. The Licensing Authority receives applications for foster care licenses and other licensing materials from public and private child-placing agencies (also referred to as "Supervising Agencies"). It reviews and approves or denies these applications and materials based on North Carolina's standards, policies, and procedures for licensing. The Licensing Authority communicates with Supervising Agencies if the licensing materials they submit require additional information, clarification, or materials so that the Licensing Authority can make a licensing decision.



The Licensing Authority does much more than fulfill an administrative function. Please see us as a resource, partners on the team serving children and families.

Yet the Licensing Authority does more than fulfill an administrative function. Please see us as a resource, part of the team serving children and families. Contact information for the Licensing Authority is as follows: NC Division of Social Services,

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Regulatory and Licensing Services, 952 Old U. S. 70 Highway, Black Mountain, NC 28711, 828/669-3388.

2. Supervising Agency

Supervising Agencies are public and private agencies responsible for recruiting, training, and supporting North Carolina's family foster care parents and therapeutic foster care parents. Supervising Agencies are an essential partner in the foster home licensing process; it is their role to submit to the Licensing Authority requests for initial licensure, relicensure, changes, terminations, and revocations. However, it is the role of the Licensing Authority to approve or deny these requests. It is also important to understand that Supervising Agencies do not have the authority to revoke licenses. Only the Licensing Authority can do that.

Supervising Agencies include all 100 county DSS agencies and the 87 private child-placing agencies licensed by the NC Division of Social Services. For a listing of public Supervising Agencies, go to <www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/local>. For a listing of private Supervising Agencies, go to <www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/licensing/listings.htm> and click on the link for "Foster Care."

3. Foster Parents

Foster parents, as part of the team of public and private agencies, play a critically important role in the child welfare system by providing the day-to-day care for children in foster care. Without their involvement, child welfare agencies would not be able to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children and families.



Without foster parents, child welfare agencies could not effectively ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in foster care.

There are two types of foster parents in North Carolina: those that provide **family foster care** and those that provide **therapeutic foster care** (sometimes called "treatment" foster care). Both types are licensed for a period of two years, after which they must renew their licenses to continue fostering. Both are knowledgeable, loving people who devote a portion of their lives to helping children and their families. As outlined below, the two types of foster parents also differ in many respects.

Advice from foster parents:

Treat foster parents as if you are glad they are on the team, not like they are "under" your control.

Be sure foster and adoptive parents can give their concerns and perspective when they are in child and family team meetings and for therapeutic decisions.

	Family Foster Care	Therapeutic Foster Care
License Duration	2 years	2 years
Maximum number of children in the home	5 Includes the number of family foster children (<i>capacity</i>), the foster parent's own children, relative children, licensed capacity for in-home day care, and children receiving baby sitting services.	4 Includes own children and relative children; no more than 2 (<i>capacity</i>) of the 4 children may be foster children. This can be two therapeutic foster children, one therapeutic foster child and one family foster child, or two family foster children.
Reason for Placement	Abuse, neglect, or dependency	Behavioral mental health; abuse, neglect, or dependency
Needs of Children	Vary	Usually more intense, complex needs than children in family foster care
Required Training	30 hours of pre-service 10 hours of training annually, with a total of 20 hours for relicensure Child-specific training outlined in out-of-home family services agreement Training in first-aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), universal precautions, and medication administration before a child is placed in the home.	40 hours of pre-service 10 hours of training annually, with a total of 20 hours for relicensure During the first year of licensure additional training in: the dynamics and needs of emotionally disturbed and substance-abusing youth and families, development of the person-centered plan, symptoms of substance abuse, and crisis intervention. This training may count towards 10 hours of in-service training. Child-specific training outlined in person-centered plan Training in first-aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), universal precautions, and medication administration before a child is placed in the home.
Compensation	Monthly payments according to NC's foster care board rate for room, board, and supervision	Monthly payments for room, board, supervision, and Medicaid payments for providing therapeutic services
Other	Cannot provide CAP/DA services in the home unless the disabled adult was placed in the foster home as a CAP C client prior to his or her 18th birthday. This CAP/DA client counts in the capacity.	Cannot provide in-home day care, baby sitting services, or CAP/DA services in the home unless the disabled adult was placed in the foster home as a CAP C client prior to his or her 18th birthday. This CAP/DA client counts in the capacity.

4. Birth Families

Because they interact with their children and with foster parents, birth parents and their families (grandparents, aunts and uncles, etc.) also affect the world of licensing. Preparing foster parents to work with birth parents through shared parenting and educating foster parents about the issues with which birth families often struggle are key tasks for licensing professionals. If they perform these tasks effectively, foster parents are more likely to continue fostering, children will have more stable

placements, and there will be a better overall chance for improved outcomes for children and their families.

5. Children

Although their presence in foster care is caused by the actions of adults, children exert tremendous influence on the lives of foster parents and the social workers who license them. Children with challenging behaviors or intense needs can strain caregivers who are not adequately prepared. By carefully selecting, training, and matching foster parents and children, licensing workers help make sure everyone in the foster home is safe and well.

6. Rights and Responsibilities

To read about the rights and responsibilities of some of the parties described in this section, see item J, “Rights and Responsibilities,” in the Appendix.

Two Types of Licenses

Licenses are valid for the *number of children specified* and for the *period of time* and *place of residence*. The foster family receives an actual certificate of licensure from the Licensing Authority. There are two types of licenses:

- **Full.** Good for a maximum of two years, full licenses can be renewed.
- **Provisional.** Usually granted by the Licensing Authority only in special circumstances, provisional licenses are good for a maximum of six months while some below-standard component is being corrected. Provisional licenses cannot be renewed.

CHAPTER 2

LICENSING RULES

In This Chapter

- The Philosophy Behind the Rules
- Successful Use of the Rules
- Rules Are Minimal Standards
- Rules and Waivers
- Where to Find the Rules
- Where to Find the Forms

On recommendation from the Division of Social Services, the North Carolina Social Services Commission sets the rules for foster care licensing. The rules are listed in Chapter 10A of the North Carolina Administrative Code, Section 70E. The notation is 10A NCAC 70E. They are often referred to as “THE RULES” or “70E.” Social workers and licensing professionals in private and public child-placing agencies contribute to the development and revision of these rules to ensure they reflect the best thinking of child placing and foster home professionals.

The Philosophy Behind the Rules

North Carolina’s child welfare system seeks to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of all children. Accordingly, we have created licensing standards, rules, and procedures that we believe promote practice that supports these goals. These tools have evolved and will continue to evolve based on what we learn from research and from the experiences of North Carolina’s licensing professionals, foster families, and others.

Safety First. In North Carolina the safety of the child—and of everyone else—is our first concern. One of the best ways to protect children in foster care is through rigorous licensing processes and continual assessment of the safety of everyone in the foster home.



Behind North Carolina’s licensing rules, standards, and policy lies a firm belief in the power and effectiveness of respectful partnerships with all families, including foster families.

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Family-Centered Practice. We also believe strongly in the benefits of family-centered child welfare practice, which is an approach that can be applied to all families, including foster families. In our state the core concepts of respectful, family-centered practice are expressed in the Six Principles of Partnership (See item I in the Appendix). These principles are the foundation of North Carolina's Multiple Response System.

The 12 Skills. The 12 Skills for Successful Fostering and Adopting are similar to the Six Principles in that they emphasize partnership, building on the strengths of the child, and using those strengths to meet needs. For more on the 12 Skills, see Chapter 3, "Initial Licensing Process and Forms."

Successful Use of the Rules

For the licensing process to function properly and achieve its intended purpose (ensuring the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in out-of-home care), licensing professionals must keep two things in mind.

- **The rules are guides.** As explained further below, they are minimal standards designed to help social workers make licensing decisions in keeping with North Carolina's safety-oriented, strengths-building, family-centered philosophy.



To use the rules successfully, licensing professionals must make active use of their professional judgment.

- **You must actively use your judgment.** To use the rules successfully, social workers must make active use of their professional judgment. Rather than using the rules as a comprehensive checklist that we can rely on to tell us whether a family would make an appropriate foster placement, licensing professionals should be constantly aware of the spirit behind the rules.
For example, even if there is no prohibition within the rules on licensing homes with trampolines, the spirit of the rules would indicate that this would be a serious issue of concern. Statistics suggest that trampoline-related injuries are increasing, and that even when children are carefully supervised, injuries are still likely to occur. Although fractures and broken bones are the most common trampoline-related injury, serious head and neck injuries also occur frequently (Dreyfuss 1998).

Rules Are Minimal Standards

North Carolina's licensure rules reflect the absolute minimum child-placing agencies must do to ensure basic protection of children in out-of-home care. It is the Division's hope that child-placing agencies will build upon this baseline to raise standards for foster homes and improve the care provided to children.

Rules and Waivers

North Carolina's foster home licensing rules cover most situations faced by licensing professionals. Yet occasionally there will be circumstances that do not fit the rules. In such circumstances, the rules may be "waived" on a case-by-case basis. Some rules and procedures may be waived administratively at the discretion of the Licensing Authority. Some require extra work to be waived. Others can never be waived.

If you have such issues, call the Licensing Authority and discuss it with a licensing consultant. See page 3 for tips for leaving the "perfect" licensing-related phone message.



None of the requirements regarding training, fingerprinting, or criminal record checks may be waived. However, if you are faced with a specific situation where the rules do not seem to help get a competent family licensed to care for children, call the Licensing Authority.

Rules pertaining to care of children may be waived by submitting a formal request for a waiver. This requires submitting form DSS-5199 (Request for a Waiver). For example, our rules require that foster parents complete high school or have a GED. For family foster care we can waive this if the Supervising Agency provides documentation (on the DSS-5199) that the foster parent has basic reading and writing skills, can read and follow medication instructions, and can effectively use the Medication Administration Record (MAR). However, Mental Health/Medicaid service definitions require that therapeutic foster parents must have completed high school or have a GED; this requirement cannot be waived.

Some rules may not be waived. None of the training requirements may be waived. The rules about fingerprinting and criminal record checks are based on specific North Carolina laws and cannot be waived.

Keeping in mind the rules that cannot be waived, if you are faced with a specific situation where the rules do not seem to help get a competent family licensed to care for children, call the Licensing Authority. Discuss the situation with a consultant. Licensing consultants are there to help assure safety, permanence, and well-being for our children and to make the licensing process as efficient as possible.

To request a waiver, submit a DSS-5199. A sample of this form can be found on the following page. Note that in most cases it is necessary to notify the guardians ad litem for the children in the home when requesting a waiver.

Where to Find the Rules

Rules. North Carolina's Licensing Rules (Chapter 10A of the North Carolina Administrative Code, Section 70E) can be found online at <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/licensing/10ANCAC70E.htm>

Manual. Additional information about foster care licensing in North Carolina can be found in the NCDSS Family Services Manual, Volume 1, Chapter IV, Section 1213, "Standards and Procedures for Licensing." This material is available online at <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-40/man/>

Where to Find Criminal History and Background Check Information

- **Local Criminal Record:** Clerk of Superior Court at the courthouse where the applicant resides, request an AOC (Administrative Office of the Courts) record check.
- **Statewide Database Check:** This check is free and available online at <http://www.doc.state.nc.us/offenders>. Select Offender Information-Public Search.
- **North Carolina Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry:** This check is free and available online at <http://ncfindoffender.com>.
- **Nurse Aide I and Health Care Personnel Registry:** This check is free and available online at <http://www.ncnar.org> or you can call 919/715-0562.
- **Fingerprint Check:** Samples of the required forms for this check are in the Appendix (L. Fingerprinting forms) of this guide. Forms are accessed from and forwarded to:

Criminal Records Check Unit
319 Chapanoke Road
2201 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2201

Where to Find the Forms

Go to <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/forms.aspx?dc=dss>. Please note that forms are revised periodically. You are advised to visit this page occasionally to ensure you have the most recent version of the forms you use.

Sample Request for Waiver of Foster Home Licensing Rule (DSS-5199)

FOSTER HOME REQUEST FOR WAIVER

Agency Name: _____

Name of Foster Parents: _____

Facility ID #: _____

Specify rule to be waived: _____

Rationale for supporting this waiver request: *Provide sufficient details to support your waiver request.*

Sample

Was the Guardian Ad Litem Program notified of this waiver request? ☐ YES ☐ NO
If not, explain why in the rationale statement above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

If requesting a waiver at any time other than the original application, or relicense application, please remember to also attach the DSS-5157 (Relicense, Change, Termination Request).

Please attach this waiver request to the front of your application in order for prompt attention to be given to this matter.

CHAPTER 3

INITIAL LICENSING PROCESS AND FORMS

In This Chapter

- Using the Mutual Home Assessment and the 12 Skills of Parenting
- Time Line for a New Application
- Organization of Licensing Materials
- The Perfect New Application

In this section we cover all of the steps needed to apply for an initial license for a potential foster parent. This chapter reviews the assessment process, organization of licensing materials, and how to complete the forms necessary for initial licensure. But before looking at the specific forms, it is important to think about the goals and the philosophy involved in licensing a new foster family.

Using the Mutual Home Assessment and the 12 Skills of Parenting

The mutual home assessment is the framework for all of the conversations you have with a potential foster family, and for all of the paperwork you complete. If the forms represent the letter of the law, the mutual home assessment represents the spirit of the law: how do we ensure that children in out-of-home placement are in an environment that is not only safe but also enriching and supportive?

At its most basic, the mutual home assessment is an item that you complete for any new prospective foster parent. Specifically, it is item IV on the Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016). But in reality, the mutual home assessment should be much more than just an item you check off. It is a way to organize your interactions with a family from the first conversation you have through all your future work with them. It is the foundation for establishing a strong, cooperative relationship with a foster family, and for ensuring a stable, nurturing environment for any future foster child.



If the licensing forms and paperwork represent the letter of the law, the mutual home assessment represents the spirit of the law, which asks us to ensure that children are in an environment that is safe, enriching, and supportive.

The Initial Assessment. As a licensing professional, you will meet with the family a number of times, and the parents will also attend MAPP/GPS training with other prospective foster parents. (MAPP/GPS, which stands for *Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting/Group Preparation and Selection*, is North Carolina's recommended pre-service training for foster and adoptive parents.) Over the course of the mutual home assessment, you will see the family in their home and in the office. For families with two parents or more, you should meet with the parents together and separately. Applicants should be observed interacting with their own children, if possible, and problem-solving issues together. You will then document what's said and done by the family in the mutual home assessment. Based on the information you gather from conversation and observation, you will use this assessment to recommend for or against licensing the foster parent applicants.

Why It's Called "Mutual." This is called a "mutual" assessment because, in truth, the agency and the family are making decisions about each other. You want to tell the family in words and actions that you are equal partners in this process. For the agency, the goals are to determine if the family's home meets the basic requirements for licensing, if the family has the skills and qualities to meet the needs of children in foster care, and if so the kind of child they can best serve. For the family, the goal is to determine if they in fact want to become foster parents, and if so, what support and training they would need and what kinds of children they would be willing to accept.



The mutual home assessment process is essential for building strong partnerships with families.

Tips for Success. So how can you as a licensing professional best facilitate the mutual home assessment process? Most importantly, of course, you need to be honest and up-front with the prospective foster family. You want to explain each step of the process, including the need to do checks for criminal history and substantiated abuse or neglect.

Potential foster parents also need, of course, respect and courtesy so that they feel supported and heard despite the frustrations of bureaucracy. Foster parents are our most valuable asset in ensuring safe care for children. While you can't make licensing easy for applicants, you can, in essence, provide the best of customer service, so they feel they have an ally. We need good foster parents, and you are the front-line in recruiting and retaining them.

Once you have begun establishing rapport, what comes next? How do you go about conducting the best possible assessment? Let's break the process down into two parts that take place simultaneously.

1. Meeting and Informing Prospective Foster Families

First, let's talk about the prospective foster parent's initial contact with the agency.

The First Contact. That first phone call or walk-in visit to your agency starts the mutual home assessment. Your agency should have guidelines on the specifics of this first contact, but what you provide are an attitude of helpfulness and enthusiasm, and your initial assessment skills. During that first contact you'll want to be sure you:

- Share Information. Right away, you want to begin giving the prospective foster parent information to help them decide whether to foster. Share information about the basic requirements for becoming a foster parent, such as age (must be 21 years old), health, education, stamina, number of children in the home, and other individuals living in the home. Also tell them about the steps and time involved in the application process.
- Listen and Observe. Give the applicants a chance to ask questions, explain how they came to contact your agency, and share some of their expectations for the process. How receptive are they to taking the time involved to complete the assessment and training? How open are they initially to the variety and needs of children in foster care? As you learn the answers to these and other questions you will begin to get a sense of how these parents communicate and why they want to foster.

Together you decide whether to continue the process.



You can't make licensing easy for applicants, but you can provide good customer service. We need good foster parents, and you are the front line in recruiting and retaining them.

As the Assessment and Training Period Continues. During the course of the assessment and training period, licensing professionals must ensure that the family:

- Learns about the agency's services, policies, procedures, and expectations for foster families.
- Understands the emotional needs of children in care, and how foster families and agencies can help meet those needs.
- Asks (and answers) key questions. For example, what impact will fostering have on their marriage, their other children, and their family? What can they provide for children in foster care? Where will they need help in providing for them? Foster parents need to grapple with these questions.
- Thinks concretely about the time management skills, physical space, and community and material resources they can call upon.

- Assesses their own emotional resources and how they might be challenged by caring for children in foster care.

Advice from a foster parent:

Meet with the entire family in a family meeting or go on outings with the family.

Some of this information and reflection takes place during MAPP/GPS training, but you also want to be sure that you're supplementing the training in your own conversations with the family. By the end of the process, applicants will be able to make an informed decision about whether they are able and willing to undertake the responsibilities of fostering.

If this is what the family needs to get from the process, what about the licensing professional?

2. Assessing Prospective Foster Families Using the 12 Skills

As explained above, assessment begins with your first contact with prospective foster families. By doing a thorough assessment, licensing professionals help to promote permanency and ensure children have the most favorable conditions for their development. A wonderful way to do this is to frame your ongoing assessment around the same 12 parenting skills we teach in MAPP/GPS. (For a listing of the 12 skills, see item "H" in the Appendix.) In fact, the 12 skills represent best practice—they are the "secret" to successful foster care. We want to be sure that foster parents have each of these skills by the time MAPP/GPS training is over.



The 12 skills are the "secret" to success for licensing professionals AND foster parents. They are also the key to ensuring the ongoing safety of children in foster care.

You will want to keep all 12 skills in mind as you observe the applicants as they participate in MAPP, and as they interact as a family. It can be very helpful for new professionals to shadow a more experienced worker on a home visit to have a model to work from in the beginning. Every professional has a different style, so you will develop your own repertoire of questions and activities. The important thing is to observe the family interacting and gather information from different perspectives. Consider asking the family to do one of the following during a home visit:

- Discuss becoming a foster family
- If the family already has children, play a game or engage in some other activity they enjoy
- Discuss how other family members, friends, and neighbors feel about their decision to become foster parents
- Stop by during a meal time, possibly on your way home from work to drop something off

It's important to see things in real time, rather than just relying on self-report.

How exactly are you supposed to confirm that prospective foster parents possess each of the 12 skills? To help you with this task we will consider the example of Mrs. Smith, who has two children: Jenny, age 7, and Timmy, age 9.

To Assess the Following Skills . . .

- Assess and build on individual and family strengths and needs
- Identify the strengths and needs of children placed in the home
- Build on children's strengths and meet the needs of children placed in the home
- Help children placed in the home manage their behaviors

You Could Ask the Parent . . .

How would you describe the members of your family, both their strengths and areas where they need help? What kinds of things help Jenny when she has a hard time listening? You mentioned Timmy is very musical. Is he involved in any kind of musical activities? Timmy seemed to get frustrated during the game. Can you tell me about that? How do you discipline your children? How were you disciplined as a child? What are your thoughts about corporal punishment?

Based on Your Observations

How does Mrs. Smith intervene when there are conflicts among family or group members? Does she anticipate when someone might have a hard time or need help? Does she acknowledge when someone does a good job or helps out? Does she set limits firmly and consistently? Does she assign roles and responsibility fairly?

You Might Write in Your Assessment

"Mrs. Smith was/was not able to describe strengths and needs, and demonstrated/did not demonstrate an ability to build on or address them. She showed/did not show an ability to help children manage their behavior." Give specific examples, such as "Mrs. Smith was able to help her children manage conflicts while playing a game, and in private she was able to list the strengths and needs of each of her children. For example, she said that Timmy takes music lessons to develop this talent, but he sometimes needs help talking things out rather than fighting or yelling"

To Assess the Following Parenting Skills . . .

- Use and develop effective communication
- Develop partnerships with children placed in the home, birth family, the agency, and the community to develop and carry out plans for permanency

You Could Ask the Parent . . .

What church or community activities are you involved in? What kinds of things do you do at your job? Please tell me about a time when you had a problem or conflict at work. How did you resolve it? What suggestions do you have for how the MAPP/GPS training could be more helpful? What were your most favorite and least favorite parts of the training?

Based on Your Observations

How does Mrs. Smith communicate questions and concerns in one-on-one and group settings? Is she able to give negative feedback and admit when she doesn't know something? Is she able to ask for help? Does she explain ground rules or expectations to her family?

You Might Write in Your Assessment

"Mrs. Smith does/does not communicate effectively and develop successful partnerships." Give specific examples to support this statement, such as, "Mrs. Smith is a deacon in her church and teaches Sunday school." "Mrs. Smith is a store manager who leads team meetings and supervises five employees." "Mrs. Smith was an active member of the pre-service group who asked appropriate questions at the right time and listened to others."

To Assess the Following Skill . . .

- Help children placed in the home develop skills to manage loss and form attachments

You Could Ask the Parent . . .

Children coming into foster care have experienced a lot of painful losses. Have you ever lost anyone close to you? How did you deal with the loss and the anger that followed? What helped you during that time? What did you learn from the experience that might be helpful to a foster child experiencing her own loss? Once you had gotten through the hardest part of your grief, were there certain things that would trigger renewed grief reactions for you? What would it be like for you to have a child in your home who might be too wounded to thank you or show any appreciation for

what you're doing? What do you think it would be like to have a foster child return home after being part of your family?

Based on Your Observations

How does Mrs. Smith help family or group members manage frustration or disappointment? How does she show affection or give positive feedback?

You Might Write in Your Assessment

"Mrs. Smith does/does not have experience coping with loss and helping other people cope with loss." To support this statement you might say, "Mrs. Smith lost her grandmother, who helped to raise her, five years ago. She describes her faith and her family as major supports in coping with the loss. She said the hardest phase of grieving was the depression stage. She says she knows it takes time to get over feeling depressed, and she says she will help a foster child when he or she goes through that phase."

To Assess the Following Skills . . .

- Help children placed in the home maintain and develop relationships that keep them connected to their pasts
- Help children placed in the home build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural and racial identity

You Could Ask the Parent . . .

What do you do to keep in touch with family and friends who live in other places? What cultural or religious groups do you belong to? Please tell me about your family's special family or cultural traditions. Please show me the photo albums or scrapbooks you keep for your children.

You Might Write in Your Assessment

"Mrs. Smith expresses/does not express an understanding of the importance of maintaining attachments and family and cultural identity." To support this, give examples, such as, "Mrs. Smith is close to her sister, who has adopted two children from Vietnam. She supports her sister's efforts to keep her adopted niece and nephew connected to their culture of origin by celebrating Vietnamese New Year with them and by preparing Vietnamese food for them. One summer she even attended Vietnamese culture camp with them."

To Assess the Following Skill . . .

- Provide a safe and healthy environment for children placed in the home which keeps them free from harm

You Could Ask the Parent . . .

Let's walk around the house and identify any areas that might be unsafe for small children. What adjustments did you have to make for your own children when they were young? Who are the regular doctors and dentist for your family? What would you do if a child became unconscious? Who would you call? What is the number?

Based on Your Observations

Is Mrs. Smith able to identify potential hazards or risks around her home and yard? Once identified, does she make changes over time to correct them, or does she minimize risks, express reluctance, or just never get around to it? Do she and her family have a history of regular preventive health care or of managing any chronic illnesses?

You Might Write in Your Assessment

"Mrs. Smith has/has not created a safe and healthy environment in her home and is/is not willing to make changes as needed to ensure safety." You might support this assertion by noting that "Mrs. Smith has not only placed potentially harmful household chemicals in locked cabinets, upgraded her smoke detectors, and made other safety-related changes, but she has converted a spare room into a "rainy day" room stocked with books, puzzles, and age-appropriate games so that Timmy and Jenny have a place to play during inclement weather."

To Assess the Following Skills . . .

- Assess the ways in which providing foster or therapeutic foster care affects the family
- Make an informed decision whether to provide foster or therapeutic foster care

You Could Ask the Parent . . .

How will providing care affect your family? What do your family members think? How do you know? Have you discussed this with any of your neighbors? What do they think? Have you done any reading or spoken with anyone else who has provided foster care?

Based on Your Observations

How does Mrs. Smith explain fostering and the difference it will make to her children? Has she given her family members a chance to express their concerns? Does she seem realistic in her expectations?

You Might Write in Your Assessment

"Mrs. Smith has/has not assessed the ways fostering will impact her family and is/is not making an informed decision." Give concrete, specific examples to support this conclusion, such as "Mrs. Smith realizes that her family will have to spend more time in meetings and taking children to medical appointments."

Tips for Documenting the 12 Skills

The mutual home assessment is not a biography or an autobiography. Proper documentation has the following structure:

- General conclusion ("Mrs. Smith expresses an understanding of the importance of maintaining attachments and family and cultural identity") followed by
- Specific examples to support that conclusion ("Mrs. Smith supports her sister's efforts to keep her adopted niece and nephew connected to their culture of origin by celebrating Vietnamese new year with them and by preparing Vietnamese food")
- Avoid affective/cognitive language such as "understands," "knows," "feels," and "appreciates" in the examples you give to support your conclusions
- Instead, support your conclusions by describing the applicant's specific behaviors or the words that she used ("Mrs. Smith, who lost her grandmother five years ago, says she recovered from the loss through prayer, increased involvement in her church, and by spending additional time in her garden.")
- Remember that applicants can demonstrate the 12 skills in ways that don't involve children, such as in their job, volunteer work, or hobbies.

3. Using Other Sources of Information

There are two other important sources of information to help assess applicants' skills. The first is MAPP/GPS. Foster parents complete the strengths/needs worksheets for every week of MAPP/GPS. Group leaders are also encouraged to do meeting notes during MAPP/GPS. Both of these items should be in the parent's MAPP/GPS portfolio. Even if you are not teaching their particular class, collaborate with the teacher so you can follow up with families on concerns they identify for themselves as they learn about the 12 skills.



All adult members of the foster home must provide three references from non-relatives.

Second, all adult members of the foster home must provide three references (e.g., employer, pastor, neighbor, etc.). Use references wisely by following the same format of the 12 skills. References might be able to give specific examples of an applicant exhibiting the skills: How does Mrs. Smith let her boss know when she's having a problem? How does Mrs. Smith get along with other folks in the neighborhood? Do you know of any times when Mrs. Smith helped someone or helped solve a problem in the community? What kinds of things does Mrs. Smith do for your church family?

By looking at a family from different perspectives, you can develop a more accurate picture of their strengths and needs. You also have an entry into important and sometimes difficult topics when you're following up from training or from a reference check. These outside sources can open up lines of communication that are crucial to your partnership with a family.

4. Enhancing Foster Parents' Knowledge and Skills

What do you do if, during your initial assessment of a family, you find that they do not fully possess one or more of the essential skills we look for in foster and adoptive parents? Although it may be disappointing in the moment, such a conclusion does not necessarily signal an end to their aspirations to foster. In many cases, licensing professionals can connect the family with resources—especially training resources—and work with them to help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to become licensed foster parents. See Chapter 10, “Training 101,” for resources that can help you with this task.



Always keep your “assessment hat” on. Using the 12 skills as a guide is the best way to ensure safety for children in foster care and success for foster parents.

5. Documenting the Mutual Home Assessment

Remember that it is important to clearly document what's said and done during your times with the family. This is for submission to the Licensing Authority, to support the recommendation for licensure. But it's also important for the other professionals and clients of your agency. Foster care staff can best decide how to match foster families and children if they have a clear sense of the family from the initial assessment. The mutual home assessment is a crucial foundation for supporting permanency for all the potential foster children to come.

Mutual Home Assessments (DSS 5016–revised 09/01/07) are required for new applications and must be completed by a social worker and contain the following:

1. **A Family History:** A narrative of the applicants' family history, including information about parents and siblings, marriages, and family support systems;

ability to cope with problems, stress, frustrations, crises, and loss; disciplinary methods used by the applicants' parents; personal experiences of abuse and/or neglect and domestic violence; criminal convictions; drug or alcohol abuse; emotional stability and maturity; ability to give and receive affection; religious orientation, if any; educational and employment history. Adoptive home studies (pre-placement assessments) can be accepted as the family history.

2. **An Assessment of the 12 Skill Areas:** Document how the licensing professional knows that the applicant has mastered each skill. Please number and list each skill area and document strengths and needs in each skill area.
3. **An Assessment of Willingness to Participate in Shared Parenting:** An assessment in this area will document the applicant's ability to work in partnership with birth parents, guardians, and custodians as necessary to support past connections, emotional stability, and permanency for children. Family-centered practice is an integral part of shared parenting; it extends into the provision of placement services by involving the child's family in developing and implementing a plan for permanence by partnering with the foster family, agency, and service providers as needed. Shared parenting is the seventh principle of the Multiple Response Program of Family Support and Child Welfare Services in North Carolina. Applicants need to be informed that an initial shared parenting meeting is required during the first seven days a child is placed in DSS custody by the court. This initial meeting will be with the foster care social worker, foster parents, and the child's parent or guardian. Applicants need to understand and be willing to support ongoing shared parenting activities throughout the time a child is in their home.
4. **An assessment with regards to the applicant's financial ability to provide foster care.** Providing foster care for a child should not be an applicant's plan for financial stability. Applicants must demonstrate financial stability and ability to absorb the additional financial strain that providing foster care may present.
5. **Dates and Locations of Contacts with Each Family Member.**

5 Steps of a Mutual Home Assessment

1. A Family History on each applicant
2. An Assessment of the 12 Skill Areas
3. An Assessment of the applicant's ability to participate in Shared Parenting
4. An Assessment with regards to the applicant's Financial ability to provide foster care
5. Dates and locations of contacts with each family member

As we cover the timeline, organization of materials, and each of the forms involved in initial licensing, remember that you must continue to wear your “assessment hat” for each step in the process. Whether you’re focusing on a family’s parenting skills, their home’s physical environment, or their medical history, you always want to consider how this family will support a child in foster care, their commitment to providing foster care, and what might help them to succeed.

Time Line for a New Application

When you are licensing a new family, there is no specific timeline to complete all of the necessary items. In fact, most of the time you do many things simultaneously. You and the foster parents continue your mutual assessment, the foster parents participate in MAPP/GPS training, and you are meeting separately to address individual needs and complete all the other required forms. We’ll go over each form in detail below.

While you can complete the forms in any order, the magic number to keep in mind is 180 days. All of the licensing materials need to be received by the Licensing Authority within 180 days of when they are signed and dated. The only exception is the Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156), which must be received within one year of when it is signed by the medical provider and foster parent.



The magic number for a new license application is 180 days. HOWEVER, some families lose their enthusiasm and drop out if the initial licensing process takes too long, so licensing professionals should try to complete everything within three months.

You’ll find that some forms take longer to complete and may require more of the foster family, so start with these first if you can. Most notably, the criminal background check needs to be processed by the Division of Child Development and the NC State Bureau of Investigation, so fingerprinting should take place early on.

In addition, the Environmental Conditions and Health Regulations Check List (DSS-5150) may require some modifications or repairs to the home, the Fire Safety Inspection Report (DSS-1515) requires an appointment with a fire inspector, and the Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156) usually requires a trip to the doctor.

Of course, new applications can be submitted as soon as all of the paperwork is complete. Some workers find that families lose their enthusiasm and drop out if the initial licensing process takes too long, so they try to complete everything within three months.

Helpful Checklists. For examples of checklists to track all of the requirements for new applications, see items “E” and “F” in the Appendix. Appendix “E” is for items submitted to the Licensing Authority; Appendix “F” is for items that need to be kept in the agency file.

Organization of Licensing Materials

Each question asked on the application forms for a new license, renewal, change, termination, or revocation is information the Licensing Authority needs to review and approve your request. Please use the applicable Perfect Licensing Packet Document when completing your licensing action requests. Using these tools, along with the most current revision of required forms, will help the Division review and process licensing actions in a timely manner. It will also reduce the volume of packets being returned or held pending due to insufficient information. The following documents are available online: *Perfect Licensing Packet*, *Perfect Re-Licensing Packet*, *Perfect Change Application*, and *Perfect Transfer Packet*. They can be found at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/licensing/misc.htm. Please use the most recent forms. These can be found at <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/forms.aspx?dc=dss>.

The Perfect New Application

The box below lists the contents of the “perfect” new application package, including what to send to the Licensing Authority and what to keep on file in your agency.

The Perfect New Application

Send to Licensing Authority:

- Cover letter
- Foster Care Facility License Action Request (DSS-5015)
- Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016) & Mutual Home Assessment
- Fire Safety Inspection Report (DSS-1515)
- Environmental Conditions and Health Regulations Checklist (DSS-5150)
- Medical History Form (DSS-5017) & TB test results
- Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156)
- Finger Print Clearance Letter

Keep in Agency Foster Parent File:

- Copy of all documents listed above
- Agency Foster Parent Agreement (DSS-1796)
- Notice of Mandatory Criminal History Check (DSS-5280)
- Discipline Agreement
- Results of Local Court Record Check
- Results of North Carolina Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry Search
- Results of Nurse Aide I and Health Care Personnel Registry Search
- Results of North Carolina Department of Corrections Offender Information Search
- Documentation of training requirements
- References on all applicants

Also, for examples of checklists to track all of the requirements for new applications, see items “E” and “F” in the Appendix.

1. Sample Cover Letter

Children's Solutions
100 Smith Haven Drive
Charlotte, NC 28215-0100

NC Division of Social Services
Regulatory and Licensing Services
952 Old U.S. 70 Highway
Black Mountain, NC 28711

RE: New License Application for Jane B. Smith

Dear Licensing Consultant:

Enclosed please find a complete new application for Jane B. Smith to be a family foster home provider. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at 704-123-4567, ext. 123 or e-mail me at Jill.Doe@email.net.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Jill Doe
Licensing Professional

2. Foster Care Facility License Action Request (DSS-5015)

2A. Special Notes about this Form

- The DSS-5015 is required for any licensing action: new applications, relicenses, changes, terminations, revocations, and waivers.
- Documents sent to the Licensing Authority without a DSS-5015 will automatically be sent back to you.
- You can obtain the DSS-5015 by going to <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5015.pdf>
- The DSS-5015 may be filled in by hand for a **new** license.
- Whenever you submit this form you will receive a “turnaround” DSS-5015 in return. A “turnaround” DSS-5015 is the document printed by the Licensing Authority and sent to the Supervising Agency with every licensing action. The turnaround contains pre-printed information. Use this form for your next licensing action.
- For any actions other than a new action, mark changes in **INK** on the turnaround (pre-printed DSS-5015).
- Follow the instructions outlined in section 2c.

Things to Remember for All Forms

- Fill in all required information, date all documents, and gather required signatures.
- All documents must be received by the Licensing Authority within 180 days of when they are signed and dated.
- To ensure your request is processed expediently, always use a copy of your turnaround DSS-5015.

2B. Completed Example of the DSS-5015

(1) AGENCY CASE NO. _____

**NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FOSTER CARE FACILITY LICENSE ACTION REQUEST**

(2) CO. NO. 6 0

(4) NAME OF SUPERVISING AGENCY

(3)

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 COUNTY DSS
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 PUBLIC AGENCY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 PRIVATE AGENCY

C h i l d r e n ' s S o l u t i o n s

(5) FACILITY ADDRESS 1 0 0 S m i t h H a v e n D r i v e

(6) AREA CODE 7 0 4 HOME PHONE NUMBER 1 2 3 - 4 5 6 7

CITY C h a r l o t t e STATE N C ZIP CODE 2 8 2 1 5 - 0 1 0 0

(7) FOSTER PARENT NAME OR FACILITY NAME J a n e B . S m i t h

(8) SOC. SEC. NUMBER 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

(9) DATE OF BIRTH 0 7 1 2 5 7

(10) RACE 0 1 COMMENTS _____

(11) SEX

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 MALE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 FEMALE

(12) EDUCATION

<input type="checkbox"/>	GRADE COMPLETED OR POST SECONDARY YEARS
0 4	

(13) TRAINING

HOURS	TYPE
3 0	1 ORIENTATION
	2 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
	3 SPECIFIC CHILD

(14) FOSTER PARENT NAME _____

(15) SOC. SEC. NUMBER ④

(16) DATE OF BIRTH _____

(17) RACE 0 1

(18) SEX

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 MALE
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 FEMALE

(19) EDUCATION

<input type="checkbox"/>	GRADE COMPLETED OR POST SECONDARY YEARS

(20) TRAINING

HOURS	TYPE
	1 ORIENTATION
	2 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
	3 SPECIFIC CHILD

(21) CAPACITY 0 0 3

(22) SEX

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 MALE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 FEMALE
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 BOTH

AGE (23) FROM 0 0 TO 2 1

(24) RATE 0 0 0 0

(26) FAMILY INCOME

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 UNDER 10,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 10-19,999
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 20-29,999
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 30-39,999
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 40-49,999
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 50,000

(27) TYPE CARE PROVIDED

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 FOSTER CARE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 KINSHIP/RELATIVE FOSTER CARE
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 SPECIALIZED FOSTER CARE
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 EMERGENCY SHELTER CARE
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 SPECIAL PROGRAM

(29) OTHER HH MEMBERS 18 OR OLDER

	LAST NAME	FIRST	MI
1			
2			
3			
4			

(28) TYPE OF FACILITY

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1 FAMILY FOSTER HOME
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 GROUP HOME
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 INSTITUTION
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 MATERNITY HOME
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 RES TREATMENT
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 THER CAMP

(41) MEDICAID ID # _____

(42) PROFIT INDICATOR

<input type="checkbox"/>	PROFIT
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NON-PROFIT

(30) FACILITY I.D. _____

(31) SUPERVISING AGENCY _____

STATE OFFICE USE ONLY

LICENSE ISSUED (32) FROM _____ (33) TO _____

(34) OTHER LICENSING ACTIONS

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 CHANGE
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 TERMINATION
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 RELICENSE
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 NEW

(35) EFFECTIVE DATE _____

(38) OTHER _____

(39) PROCESSING INFORMATION

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

(40) WAIVER GRANTED

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

(36) LICENSE TYPE

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 FULL
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 PROVISIONAL

(37) REASONS FOR PROVISIONAL

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 SANITATION STANDARD
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 OTHER - EXPLAIN IN # 38

2C. Instructions for License Action Request (DSS-5015)

- **Field #1** Your agency's case number, if you have case numbers for each family. If not, leave blank.
- **Field #2** County code for county in which potential foster family lives (see county code list, item A, in the Appendix)
- **Field #3** Your agency's category: county DSS, public, or private. It is very important to complete this.
- **Field #4** Your agency's name
- **Fields #5 & 6** Physical address/phone number of foster parent applicant (P.O. Box is not acceptable)
- **Field #7** First name, middle initial, and then last name of applicant (no nicknames)
- **Field #8** Applicant's social security number
- **Field #9** Applicant's birth date
- **Field #10** Race code (see Appendix B for a complete list of Race Codes)
- **Field #11** Sex
- **Field #12** Education: fill in top blanks for last grade completed up to grade 12, OR fill in bottom blanks with post high school years of education.
- **Field #13** Training: must have at least 30 hours for new applications for family foster homes, at least 40 hours for new therapeutic foster homes, and at least 20 hours for relicensing
- **Fields #14-20** If another foster parent applicant is in the home, complete Fields 7-13 as instructed above for this person.
- **Field # 21** Maximum number of foster children that the applicant would potentially accept and be licensed for -- i.e., their total capacity for foster children.
- **Field # 22** Sex of foster children the applicant is willing to accept: Licensing Authority recommends #3 for either sex
- **Field #23** Age of foster children the applicant is willing to accept: Licensing Authority recommends ages 00-21
- **Field #24** Maintenance Rate: check with your supervisor or billing department for the appropriate rate for family foster homes and therapeutic foster homes for your agency
- **Field # 26** Family income
- **Field #27** Type of foster care to be provided: select either #1 foster care or #5 therapeutic foster care
- **Field # 28** Type of facility: select only #1 family foster home
- **Field # 29** Other household members age 18 and over: must have fingerprint clearance for each person listed
- **Fields #30-40** are for Licensing Authority use only
- **Field #41** Medicaid ID number for applicant
- **Field #42** Profit indicator: select non-profit

3. Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016)

3A. Blank Copy of Form

FOSTER HOME LICENSE APPLICATION

Required Applicants (10A NCAC 70E .1104 (d)). Foster parent applicants who are married are presumed to be co-parents in the same household and both shall complete all licensing requirements. Effective September 1, 2008, any adult, 21 years of age or older, living in currently licensed or newly licensed foster homes who has responsibility for the care, supervision, or discipline of the foster child shall complete all licensing requirements. The supervising agency shall assess each adult's responsibility for the care, supervision, or discipline of the foster child.

I. NAME, CRIMINAL HISTORY & BACKGROUND CHECK INFORMATION (10A NCAC 70E .1114 & .1116)

A. Name & Education Level

Education Level indicate: HS, GED, BA, BS, MS, PhD - *document ability to read and write in MHA if no HS/GED*

Applicant's Full Name (First, Mid., Last) / Maiden Nm / Prev. Married Nm /

1) _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

2) _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

3) _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

4) _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

B. Mailing address, if different than home address: _____

C. Criminal History & Background Check Information

Type of Background Check	Check Conducted	Date Conducted
Findings: <i>document in MHA as needed</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date :
Local Court Record Checked by Agency Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date :
Findings:		
NC Department of Corrections Offender Information http://www.doc.state.nc.us/offenders/	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date:
Findings:		
NC Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry http://ncfindoffender.com/	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date:
Findings:		
Nurse Aide I and Health Care Personnel Registry https://www.ncnar.org/faq.html	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date:
Findings:		
Child Abuse or Neglect Reported:	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Substantiation: <input type="checkbox"/> YES , Date of Substantiation: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> N/A		

D. Any Applicant Previously Licensed? ☐ YES ☐ NO If 'YES', Agency Contacted? ☐ YES ☐ NO

II. FOSTER HOME QUALIFICATIONS (10A NCAC 70E .1001)

A. Applicants' Own Children in home (First, Middle, and Last Names)

Name _____ DOB _____ Sex _____ Education (Edu.) Level _____

B. Others in Household (First, Middle, and Last Names) -include relatives, non-related boarders, day care/babysitting children, etc.

(1) Does Applicant have an In-Home Daycare? ☐ YES ☐ NO If 'YES' attach copy of Daycare License.

Name _____ DOB _____ Sex _____ Relationship to Family _____

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C. Foster Children Presently in Home Indicate if court ordered placement of relative, non-relative or child in custody of an out-of-state agency. Indicate with an asterisk (*) children placed for therapeutic services.

Name	DOB	Sex	Edu. Level	Date of Placement
------	-----	-----	------------	-------------------

D. Applicant's Own Children Not in Home (First, Middle and Last Names prior to marriage)

Name	DOB	Sex	Address (City/State)
------	-----	-----	----------------------

ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOULD RELATE TO OWN CHILDREN, RELATIVE AND/OR FOSTER CHILDREN. IF APPLICANT HAS NO PARENTING EXPERIENCE, ANSWERS SHOULD REFLECT RESPONSES DURING DISCUSSION OF THESE TOPICS.

III. STANDARDS FOR LICENSURE (10A NCAC 70E .1100)

A. Client Rights and Care of Children (10A NCAC 70E .1101)

Applicants agree to ensure that each foster child:

- | | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) has clothing to wear that is appropriate to the weather; | | |
| (2) is allowed to have personal property; | | |
| (3) is encouraged to express opinions on issues concerning care; | | |
| (4) is provided care in a manner that recognizes variations in cultural values and traditions; | | |
| (5) is provided the opportunity for spiritual development and is not denied the right to practice religious beliefs; | | |
| (6) is not identified in connection with the supervising agency in any way that would bring the child or the child's family embarrassment; | | |
| (7) is not forced to acknowledge dependency on or gratitude to the foster parents; | | |
| (8) is encouraged to contact and have telephone conversations with family members, when not contraindicated in the child's visitation and contact plan; | | |
| (9) is provided training and discipline that is appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experience; | | |
| (10) is not subjected to cruel or abusive punishment; | | |
| (11) is not subjected to corporal punishment; | | |
| (12) is not deprived of a meal or contacts with family for punishment or placed in isolation time-out except when isolation time-out means the removal of a child to an unlocked room or area from which the child is not physically prevented from leaving. The foster parent may use isolation time-out as a behavioral control measure when the foster parent provides it within hearing distance of a foster parent. The length of time alone shall be appropriate to the child's age and development; | | |
| (13) is not subjected to verbal abuse, threats, or humiliating remarks about himself/herself or his/her families; | | |
| (14) is provided a daily routine in the home that promotes a positive mental health environment and provides an opportunity for normal activities with time for rest and play; | | |
| (15) is provided training in good health habits, including proper eating, frequent bathing, and good grooming. Each child shall be provided food with nutritional content for normal growth and health. Any diets prescribed by a licensed medical provider shall be provided; | | |
| (16) is provided medical care in accordance with the treatment prescribed for the child; | | |
| (17) of mandatory school age maintains regular school attendance unless the child has been excused by the authorities; | | |
| (18) is encouraged to participate in neighborhood and group activities, have friends visit the home and visit in the homes of friends. | | |
| (19) assumes responsibility for herself/himself and household duties in accordance with her/his age, health, and ability. Household tasks shall not interfere with school, sleep, or study periods; | | |
| (20) is provided opportunities to participate in recreational activities; | | |
| (21) is not permitted to do any task which is in violation of child labor laws or not appropriate for a child of that age; | | |

- (22) is provided supervision in accordance with the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and experience; and
- (23) if less than eight years of age and weighs less than 80 pounds is properly secured in a child passenger restraint system that is approved and installed in a manner authorized by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles.

B. Medication (10A NCAC 70E .1102)

Foster parents agree to be responsible for the following regarding medication: ☐ YES ☐ NO

- (1) General requirements:
 - (a) Retain the manufacturer's label with expiration dates visible on non-prescription drug containers not dispensed by a pharmacist;
 - (b) Administer prescription drugs to a child only on the written order of a person authorized by law to prescribe drugs;
 - (c) Allow prescription medications to be self-administered by children only when authorized in writing by the child's licensed medical provider;
 - (d) Allow non-prescription medications to be administered to a child taking prescription medications only when authorized by the child's licensed medical provider; allow non-prescription medications to be administered to a child not taking prescription medication, with the authorization of the parents, guardian, legal custodian, or licensed medical provider;
 - (e) Allow injections to be administered by unlicensed persons who have been trained by a registered nurse, pharmacist, or other legally qualified person;
 - (f) Immediately record in a Medication Administration Record (MAR) provided by the supervising agency all drugs administered to each child. The MAR shall include the following: child's name; name, strength, and quantity of the drug; instructions for administering the drug; date and time the drug is administered, discontinued, or returned to the supervising agency or the person legally authorized to remove the child from foster care; name or initials of person administering or returning the drug; child requests for changes or clarifications concerning medications; and child's refusal of any drug; and
 - (g) Follow-up for child requests for changes or clarifications concerning medications with an appointment or consultation with a licensed medical provider.
- (2) Medication disposal:
 - (a) Return prescription medications to the supervising agency or person legally authorized to remove the child from foster care; and
 - (b) Return discontinued prescription medications to the supervising agency for disposal, in accordance with 10A NCAC 70G .0211(c).
- (3) Medication storage:
 - (a) Store prescription and over-the-counter medications in a locked cabinet in a clean, well-lit, well-ventilated room other than bathrooms, kitchen, or utility room between 75° F (24° C) and 80° F (26.7° C);
 - (b) Store medications in a refrigerator, if required, between 36° F (2° C) and 46° F (8° C). If the refrigerator is used for food items, medications shall be kept in a separate, locked compartment or container within the refrigerator; and
 - (c) Store prescription medications separately for each child.
- (4) Psychotropic medication review:
 - (a) Arrange for any child receiving psychotropic medications to have their drug regimen reviewed by the child's licensed medical provider at least every six months;
 - (b) Report the findings of the drug regimen review to the supervising agency; and
 - (c) Document the drug review in the MAR along with any prescribed changes, if applicable.
- (5) Medication errors:
 - (a) Report drug administration errors or adverse drug reactions immediately to a licensed medical provider or pharmacist; and
 - (b) Document the drug administered and the drug reaction in the MAR.

C. Physical Restraints (10A NCAC 70E .1103)

- (1) Foster parents who utilize physical restraint holds agree to not engage in discipline or behavior management, which includes: ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A *SKIP to C. (5) if N/A*
 - (a) protective or mechanical restraints;
 - (b) drug used as a restraint, except as outlined in Paragraph (b) of this Rule;
 - (c) seclusion of a child in a locked room; or
 - (d) physical restraint holds except for a child who is at imminent risk of harm to himself/herself or others until the child is calm.

- (2) Foster Parents agree to meet the following regarding training requirements and the use to physical restraints: ☐ YES ☐ NO
- (a) Before a foster parent shall administer physical restraint holds, each foster parent shall complete training that includes at least 16 hours of initial training in behavior management, including techniques for de-escalating problem behavior, the appropriate use of physical restraint holds, monitoring of vital indicators, and debriefing children and foster parents involved in physical restraint holds.
 - (b) Foster parents authorized to use physical restraint holds shall annually complete at least eight hours of behavior management training including techniques for de-escalating problem behavior.
 - (c) This training shall count toward the training requirements as set forth in 10A NCAC 70E .1117(f)(6).
 - (d) Only foster parents trained in the use of physical restraint holds shall administer physical restraint holds.
- (3) Foster parents agree to the following regarding the administration of physical restraints: ☐ YES ☐ NO
- (a) foster parents shall use only those physical restraint holds approved by the North Carolina Interventions (NCI) Quality Assurance Committee. Approved physical restraint holds can be found at the following web site:
<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas/training/rscurricula/agencylist10-18-06web.pdf>
 - (b) before employing a physical restraint hold, the foster parent shall take into consideration the child's medical condition and any medications the child may be taking;
 - (c) no child shall be restrained utilizing a protective or mechanical device;
 - (d) no child or group of children shall be allowed to participate in the physical restraint of another child;
 - (e) physical restraint holds shall:
 - (i) not be used for purposes of discipline or convenience;
 - (ii) be used only when there is imminent risk of harm to the child or others and less restrictive approaches have failed;
 - (iii) be administered in the least restrictive manner possible to protect the child or others from imminent risk of harm; and
 - (iv) end when the child becomes calm.
 - (f) The foster parent shall:
 - (i) ensure that any physical restraint hold utilized on a child is administered by a trained foster parent with a second trained foster parent or with a second trained adult in attendance. Concurrent with the administration of a physical restraint hold and for a minimum of 15 minutes subsequent to the termination of the hold, a foster parent shall monitor the child's breathing, ascertain the child is verbally responsive and motorically in control, and ensure the child remains conscious without any complaints of pain. The supervising agency may seek a waiver from the licensing authority for a foster parent to administer a physical restraint hold without a second trained adult in attendance, based on the following criteria: completion of the waiver request form. The licensing authority shall grant the waiver if it receives approval from the child's parent, guardian, or custodian that the administering of a physical restraint hold without a second trained person present is acceptable, written approval from the supervising agency that the foster parent is authorized to administer a physical restraint hold without a second trained person present, and documentation that there is approval by the child and family team and documented in the person-centered plan or out-of-home family services agreement that it is acceptable for the foster parent to administer a physical restraint hold without a second trained person present;
 - (ii) immediately terminate the physical restraint hold or adjust the position to ensure that the child's breathing and motor control are not restricted, if at any time during the administration of a physical restraint hold the child complains of being unable to breathe or loses motor control;
 - (iii) immediately seek medical attention for the child, if at any time the child appears to be in distress; and
 - (iv) conduct an interview with the foster child about the incident following the use of a physical restraint hold.

- (g) The foster parent shall cooperate with and provide information to the supervising agency who shall:
 - (i) interview the foster parent administering the physical restraint hold about the incident following the use of a physical restraint hold;
 - (ii) document each incident of a child being subjected to a physical restraint hold on an Incident Report provided by the licensing authority. The incident report shall include (1) the child's name, age, height, and weight; (2) the type of hold utilized; (3) the duration of the hold; (4) the trained foster parent administering the hold; (5) the trained foster parent or trained adult witnessing the hold; (6) the less restrictive alternatives that were attempted prior to utilizing physical restraint; (7) the child's behavior that necessitated the use of physical restraint; and (8) whether the child's condition necessitated medical attention.
- (4) Foster parents agree to annually receive written approval from the executive director or his/her designee of the supervising agency before administering physical restraint holds. The foster parent shall retain a copy of the written approval and a copy shall be placed in the foster home record.

☐ YES ☐ NO
- (5) Foster parents agree to the following regarding physical restraints and the use of drugs:

☐ YES ☐ NO

 - (a) Drugs shall not be used for the purpose of restraining a child.
 - (b) A drug used as a restraint means a medication used only to control behavior or to restrict a child's freedom of movement, and is not a standard to treat a psychiatric condition.
 - (c) A drug shall not be used for the purpose of punishment, foster parent convenience, or substitution for adequate supervision.

IV. CRITERIA FOR THE FOSTER FAMILY & MUTUAL HOME ASSESSMENT (MHA) (10A NCAC 70E

.0800, .0802, .0803 & .1104) Applicants are persons whose behaviors, circumstances and health are conducive to the safety and well-being of children as evidenced by:

- A. Mutual Home Assessment:** The mutual home assessment shall be carried out in a series of planned discussions between the supervising agency staff, the prospective foster parent applicants and other members of the household. The family shall be seen by the social worker in the family's home and in the supervising agency's office. For two or more applicants, separate as well as joint discussions with all applicants shall be arranged.

Assessment Attached? ☐ YES ☐ NO which includes (1) – (5) below:

- (1) **Documentation of Family History** – completed by licensing professional or social worker which includes information about parents, siblings, marriages and family support systems; ability to cope with problems, stress, frustrations, crises, and loss; disciplinary methods used by the applicants' parents; personal experiences of abuse and neglect and domestic violence; criminal convictions; drug or alcohol abuse; emotional stability and maturity; ability to give and receive affection; religious orientation, if any; educational and employment history. A preplacement assessment (adoption study) is acceptable. MAPP profiles/work are unacceptable.
- (2) **Documentation of Assessment of 12 Skills** – completed by licensing professional. Foster parents shall also be selected on the basis of demonstrating strengths in the skill areas of Subparagraphs (1) through (12) of this Paragraph which permit them to undertake and perform the responsibilities of meeting the needs of children, in providing continuity of care, and in working with the supervising agency. Foster parents shall demonstrate skills in:
 - (a) Skill 1: assessing individual and family strengths and needs and building on strengths and meeting needs;
 - (b) Skill 2: using and developing effective communication;
 - (c) Skill 3: identifying the strengths and needs of children placed in the home;
 - (d) Skill 4: building on children's strengths and meeting the needs of children placed in the home;
 - (e) Skill 5: developing partnerships with children placed in the home, parents or the guardians of the children placed in the home, the supervising agency and the community to develop and carry out plans for permanency;
 - (f) Skill 6: helping children placed in the home develop skills to manage loss and skills to form attachments;
 - (g) Skill 7: helping children placed in the home manage their behaviors;
 - (h) Skill 8: helping children placed in the home maintain and develop relationships that will keep them connected to their pasts;
 - (i) Skill 9: helping children placed in the home build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural, and racial identity;

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- (j) Skill 10: providing a safe and healthy environment for children placed in the home which keeps them free from harm;
- (k) Skill 11: assessing the ways in which providing family foster care or therapeutic foster care affects the family; and
- (l) Skill 12: making an informed decision regarding providing family foster care or therapeutic foster care.
- (3) **Assessment of applicant's willingness to participate in Shared Parenting requirements**
- (4) **Assessment of applicant's Financial Ability to provide foster care**
- (5) **Dates and Locations of Contacts with each applicant and family members**

B. Physical and Mental Health of Applicants: The foster family shall be in good physical and mental health as evidenced by: **DSS-5017, DSS-5156, and TB test results attached.** ☐ YES ☐ NO

- (1) Answer 'YES' in the chart below regarding **Physical Health** if there is **NO** indication of significant Physical Health needs as reported on *DSS 5017 – Medical History form*, *DSS 5156 – Request for Medical Information form*, and *TB test results* (TB tests required for all adults 18 years old and up; children under 18 only need to be tested if an adult in the home has tested positive).
- (2) Answer 'YES' in the chart below regarding **Mental Health** if there is **NO** indication of significant **Mental Health** needs as reported on *DSS 5017 – Medical History form*, *DSS 5156 – Request for Medical Information form*, and as indicated by the following factors:
 - (a) no indication of alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or illegal drug use by a member of the foster family;
 - (b) no indication that a member of the foster family is a perpetrator of domestic violence;
 - (c) no indication that a member of the foster family has abused, neglected, or exploited a disabled adult;
 - (d) no indication that a member of the foster family has been placed on the North Carolina Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry;
 - (e) no indication that a member of the foster family has been placed on the Nurse Aide Registry pursuant to G.S. 131E-255;
 - (f) no indication that a member of the foster family has been placed on the Health Care Personnel Registry pursuant to G.S. 131E-256; and
 - (g) no indication that a member of the foster family has been found to have abused or neglected a child or has been a respondent in a juvenile court proceeding that resulted in the removal of a child or has had child protective services involvement that resulted in the removal of a child.

Name of Applicant/Household Member	Good Physical Health? Check Yes or No		Good Mental Health? Check Yes or No	
Example Mr. Applicant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Answer here regarding all Children in the home.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

If the answer is 'NO' for any applicant, household member, or child explain how the identified medical or mental health need(s) will affect ability of applicant(s) to care for children in foster care. Attach doctor, counselor, therapist note(s), etc. as needed _____

V. CONFLICT OF INTEREST (10A NCAC 70E .1105)

- A. Applicant supervised by a Public or Private child-placing agency is a member of agency board of directors, governance structure, social services board, county commission or is an agency employee or relative of an agency employee? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- B. Applicant to be supervised by a Private child-placing agency and is an owner of a child placing agency? ☐ YES ☐ NO

VI. DAYCARE CENTER OPERATION (10A NCAC 70E .1106)**A.** Applicant(s) operating or planning to operate a daycare center meet the following criteria:☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

- (1) the foster home living quarters shall not be part of the day care operation;
- (2) there shall be a separate entrance to the day care operation; and
- (3) staff specified in day care center rules shall be available to provide care for the day care children.

VII. RELATIONSHIP TO SUPERVISING AGENCY & COMPLIANCE VISITS (10A NCAC 70E .1107 & .1113)**A.** Applicants agree to work with the supervising agency in the following ways:☐ YES☐ NO

- (1) Work with the child and the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) in the placement process, reunification process, adoption process, or any change of placement process;
- (2) Consult with social workers, mental health personnel, licensed medical providers, and other persons authorized by the child's parent(s), guardian(s), or custodian(s) who are involved with the child;
- (3) Maintain confidentiality regarding children and their parent(s) or guardian(s);
- (4) Keep records regarding the child's illnesses, behaviors, social needs, educational needs, and family visits and contacts; and
- (5) Report immediately to the supervising agency any changes as required by 10A NCAC 70E .0902
- (6) Complete in-service training as required in 10A NCAC 70E .1117 and obtain required documentation for relicensure **180 days prior** to expiration of license biennially

B. Quarterly Visits: Applicants agree to allow licensing social workers from the supervising agency to visit the home or meet with the licensing social worker outside of the home on at least a quarterly basis for the specific purpose of assessing licensing requirements. Minimally, two of the quarterly visits each year shall take place in the foster home. Visits outside of the home may occur at a location of the licensing social workers preference.

☐ YES☐ NO

C. Foster parents who provide therapeutic foster care services agree to allow weekly supervision and support from a professional as defined in 10A NCAC 27G .0104 and .0203.

☐ YES☐ NO☐ N/A**VIII. PHYSICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY (10A NCAC 70E .1108, .1109, .1110, .1112)****A. Fire & Building Safety**

- (1) Discussion was held regarding home's compliance with the North Carolina State Building Code in effect at the time the home was constructed or last renovated. If a mobile home, discussion was held regarding compliance with requirements of the Federal Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards.

☐ YES☐ NO

- (2) "Approved" indicated on DSS - 1515 Fire & Building Safety Inspection form **attached**?

☐ YES☐ NO**B. Health Regulations**

- (1) Discussion was held regarding water quality and sanitation. Family is not aware of any health hazards caused by the family's water supply and sanitation facilities, and has informed the supervising agency about any water testing that has been done and any immediate or past problems concerning water quality and sanitation. There is no reason to believe the water supply is not safe or the toilet and bathing facilities are not sanitary.

☐ YES☐ NO**C. Environmental Regulations**

- (1) Environmental regulations satisfactorily met as evidenced by DSS-5150 Environmental Conditions Checklist **attached**?

☐ YES☐ NO

D. Exterior Setting & Safety

- (1) Exterior spaces around the foster home, including any yard spaces are clear of any dangerous objects or hazardous items? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- (2) Exterior spaces around the foster home are clear of bodies of water such as: swimming pools, beaches, rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, etc.? ☐ YES ☐ NO

If you answered 'NO' to (1) or (2) document how access to these objects, hazardous items, and/or bodies of water is avoided:

E. Room Arrangements and Environment

- (1) Briefly describe house, kitchen and dining areas, family or living areas and bathing facilities, and the setting in which the house is located.

Sample

- (2) Home's design allows children privacy while bathing, dressing, and using toilet facilities? ☐ YES ☐ NO

- (3) **Sleeping Arrangements:** Indicate sleeping arrangements for all members of the household including prospective and current foster children. *Bedrooms shall be identified as such and not serve dual purposes. Each child must have his/ her own bed.*

Complete Table Below: Identify types of beds in each bedroom and who occupies each bed. Only describe beds that are available or in use as of the date of application.

Bed Type: Twin, Full, Queen, King, Bunk-Twin/Twin, Bunk – Full/Twin, Crib.

Occupant(s): To signify occupant list name of Applicant(s), Applicant's Minor Child, Applicant's Relative Child, any Non-relative child, or Adult household member occupying each bed. Enter "Foster Child" as the occupant where applicable to signify bed available for foster care placements.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS CHART	Bed Type / Occupant(s)	Bed Type / Occupant(s)	Bed Type / Occupant(s)	Bed Type / Occupant(s)
Example Bedroom 0.	Queen / Mr. & Mrs. Applicant	Crib/Foster child		
Bedroom 1.				
Bedroom 2.				
Bedroom 3.				
Bedroom 4.				
Bedroom 5.				

- (4) Each bed is provided with comfortable, supported mattress, two sheets, blanket and bedspread? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- (5) Separate and accessible drawer space and closet space for personal belongings and clothing available for each child? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IX. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- A.** Each applicant has successfully completed 30 hours of pre-service training covering the components listed in 10A NCAC 70E .1117 (1). ☐ YES ☐ NO Date Completed: ____/____/____
- B.** Each applicant agrees to receive training in medication administration and; first-aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and universal precautions such as those provided by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association or equivalent organizations before a foster child is placed with the foster family. ☐ YES ☐ NO
- C.** Each applicant agrees and understands they must successfully complete at least 10 hours annually of in-service training to be re-licensed. ☐ YES ☐ NO
- D.** Each applicant agrees to receive six hours of advanced medical training consisting of issues relevant to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) annually if they care for a child with HIV or AIDS. ☐ YES ☐ NO
- E.** Each family foster parent applicant agrees to receive child specific training as outlined in the out-of-home family services agreement. *This training will count towards the 20 hours of in-service training requirement.* ☐ YES ☐ NO
- F.** Each therapeutic foster parent applicant has successfully completed 10 hours of additional pre-service training covering the components listed in 10A NCAC 70E .1117 (2). ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A Date Completed: ____/____/____
- G.** Each therapeutic foster parent applicant understands and agrees to receive additional training as specified in 10A NCAC 70E .1117 (3). *This training will count towards the 20 hours of in-service training requirement.* ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A
- H.** Each therapeutic foster parent applicant understands and agrees to receive additional child-specific training and supervision as required in 10A NCAC 70E .1117 (5). *This training will count towards the 20 hours of in-service training requirement.* ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

X. OTHER (10A NACA 70E subsections .0806, .0901, .1101, .1116, .0804)

- A.** Foster Parent Agreement signed and copy given to applicant(s) ☐ YES ☐ NO
- B.** Discipline Agreement signed and copy given to applicant(s) ☐ YES ☐ NO
- C.** Written notice regarding criminal history checks as required by G.S. 131D-10.3A(e) given to applicant(s) and adult household member(s) ☐ YES ☐ NO
- D.** At least 3 References obtained on all adult members of the foster home, copies in agency file ☐ YES ☐ NO
- E.** Agency Foster Parent Handbook with information on services, policies, standards, and expectations has been discussed with and reviewed by applicant(s) ☐ YES ☐ NO
- F.** Waiver of licensing rule requested and DSS-5199 Waiver Request form attached ☐ YES ☐ NO
- G.** Recommendation for licensure including statement regarding agency's plan for supporting the family when placements occur; briefly document below:

- H.** Submit the following documents with application:
- (1) DSS 5015 – Foster Care Facility License Action Request
 - (2) DSS 1515 – Fire Safety Inspection Report
 - (3) DSS 5150 – Environmental Conditions Checklist
 - (4) DSS 5017 – Medical History Form(s) for each applicant, household member and child
 - (5) DSS 5156 – Request for Medical Information for each applicant, household member and child
 - (6) Fingerprint Clearance Letters for each applicant and household member 18 years old and up

SIGNATURES

I have reviewed and am in agreement with the above information, declare that it is true and accurate, and understand that according to G. S. 132-1 this information may be furnished to others upon proper request. Application must be signed by all applicants, social worker, and agency head for licensure to be considered by the licensing authority.

Print Name of Applicant	Print Name of Applicant
Applicant Signature / Date	Applicant Signature / Date

Print Name of Applicant	Print Name of Applicant
Applicant Signature / Date	Applicant Signature / Date

Print Name of Social Worker	Print Name of Agency Head
Social Worker Signature / Date	Signature of Agency Head / Date
Social Worker Contact info. phone number	
Social Worker Contact info. Email address	

3B. Instructions for Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016)

Things to Remember for the DSS-5016

- The DSS-5016 contains much of the information necessary to determine whether an applicant is an appropriate candidate for a foster care license.
- It also covers a lot of very important information on fostering that needs to be reviewed in detail with applicants.
- Be sure to complete each field on the form as instructed below.

Part I Name and Background Check Information

List each applicant's full name, including maiden and previous married names. Document results of background check in the six areas listed: courthouse record check, NC Dept of Corrections Offender Check, NC Sex Offender/Public Protection Registry Check, Nurse Aide I and Health Care Personnel Registry Check, Neglect or Abuse Reported, and References. The copies of these searches must remain in your agency file. Include mailing address if it is different from the home address. If an applicant was previously licensed, the prior Supervising Agency must be contacted; this information will assist you in the assessment process.

Education level of applicant is important. If an applicant does not have a high school diploma or GED, documentation must be provided regarding the applicant's ability read and write. For example, it might be appropriate to state, "foster parent can read and understand medication prescription instructions and clearly document information on the medication administration report."

Part II Family Foster Home Qualifications

Part II A. List birth and adoptive children in the home, regardless of age.

Part II B (1). Answer the question regarding day care licensure. If the applicant does have a daycare license, a copy of the license must be provided. For the rest of Part II B list relatives (not in DSS custody), children who are in the home for babysitting, boarders, and any other people who are not children of the foster parent and not foster children. Remember to document relationship to family as requested on the application.

Part II C. List foster children currently in the home. Children in the custody of DSS can only be placed in an unlicensed foster home by the court, otherwise the placement is illegal.

Part II D. List the child(ren) of each applicant who is not in the home.

Regarding education level information requested in Part II A and Part II C, document the current grade or last grade completed for each individual listed.

Part III Standards for Licensure

Each item must be reviewed in detail with all applicants and then completed for all applicants. Only indicate “Yes” once the material in each part is reviewed in detail each applicant on the application. Mandatory guidelines and licensing rules are covered in the following areas: Part III A (client rights and care of children), Part III B (medication guidelines), and Part III C (physical restraint holds). Complete Part III C regarding the use of physical restraint holds as applicable.

Part IV Criteria for the Foster Family and Mutual Home Assessment

Part IV A lists the specific information that needs to be included in the mutual home assessment. Each area must be covered or the application will be considered incomplete. See section 5 in this chapter, “Documenting the Mutual Home Assessment,” for details regarding completion of the Mutual Home Assessment.

Part IV B is the place to document the physical and mental health status of all household members. Only answer “Yes” if there is **no** indication of physical health needs regarding **ALL** household members. If **any** person in the home has identified physical health needs, the answer to this question must be NO, and an explanation must be provided. This is also applicable for the question regarding mental health of all family members.

Part V Conflict of Interest

This question must be answered regarding each applicant on the application. If any applicant on the application is a member of the agency board of directors, governance structure, social services board, or county commission or is an agency employee or relative of an agency employee the answer must be “Yes.”

Part VI Daycare Center Operation

Answer “Yes” regarding daycare center operations if all items (1–3) are true.

Part VII Relationship to Supervising Agency and Compliance Visits

Part VII A and B must be answered “Yes” regarding applicants agreeing to work with Supervising Agency and allowing the required quarterly visits with a licensing professional.

Part VII C is only applicable to therapeutic foster parents and their agreement to allow weekly supervision and support from a professional. Enter “N/A” where applicable.

Part VIII Physical and Environmental Safety

The following must be answered “Yes” for application to be considered for licensure: Part VIII A, Fire & Building Safety; Part VIII B, Health Regulations; Part VIII C, Environmental Regulations; Part VIII D, Exterior Setting & Safety; and Part VIII E, Room Arrangements and Environment.

For Part VIII D, regarding exterior spaces clear any bodies of water, if the answer to this question is “No,” meaning there is a body of water (swimming pools, beaches,

rivers, lakes, streams) on or near the property, you must document how access to this hazard is prevented. The rule states *“access to such hazards shall be avoided by either a fence at least 48 inches high with a locked gate around the yard and exterior space of the home while still providing play space for children. Access to water in above ground swimming pools shall be prevented by locking and securing the ladder in place or storing the ladder in a place inaccessible to the children.”* It is the responsibility of the licensing professional and the agency to thoroughly assess the safety of the environment for children.

If a licensing professional or agency finds environmental hazards, steps must be taken to mitigate the hazards before submitting an application; and documentation of these measures must be submitted with the application.

Part VIII E (3) contains the **Sleeping Arrangements Chart**. Follow the instructions in the application to complete this chart. Each individual in the home will be listed here. This chart is critical, since the Licensing Authority uses it to determine whether there is adequate sleeping space and beds for foster children. Room measurements are not required. However, this room measurement information is useful, since it helps the Licensing Authority determine whether there is adequate bedroom space.

Part IX Training Requirements

Part IX A must be answered “Yes” and the date when the required 30 hours of pre-service training was completed must be provided. If there is more than one applicant on the application and they completed their training on different dates, simply write the name of the applicant and indicate the date training was completed beside the name.

Part IX B, C, and D must all be answered “Yes” for all applicants.

Part IX F, G, and H are answered “Yes” for therapeutic foster parents.

Part X Other

The following must be answered “Yes”: Part X A, Foster Parent Agreement; Part X B, Discipline Agreement; Part X C, Written Notice /Criminal History Checks; Part X D, References; and Part X E, Providing an Agency Foster Parent Handbook. These items are not submitted to the Licensing Authority. Make sure there is a copy of items A through D in your agency’s file.

Part X F is answered “Yes” if a waiver of any rule is being requested. Be sure to attach the Waiver Request form (DSS-5199) if a waiver is being requested.

Part X H is provided as a list of all the forms that need to accompany the application.



Signatures indicate the information on the application has been reviewed, that each person is in agreement with licensure requirements, and that all information is true and accurate.

Signatures

Signatures indicate the information on the application has been reviewed, that each person is in agreement with licensure requirements, and that all information is true and accurate. Signatures of each applicant on the application, the licensing professional (social worker), and the agency head or his or her designee are required. Remember to complete the printed name below each signature area for legibility purposes. If any signatures are missing, the application will be considered incomplete. Include contact information (phone number and e-mail address), for the licensing professional.

Things to Remember for All Forms

- Fill in all required information, date all documents, and gather required signatures.
- All documents must be received by the Licensing Authority within 180 days of when they are signed and dated.
- To ensure your request is processed expediently, always use a copy of your turnaround DSS-5015. However, for a new application, complete a **new** DSS-5015.

4. Fire Safety Inspection Report (DSS-1515)

4A. Blank Copy of Form

FOSTER HOME FIRE INSPECTION SAFETY REPORT

NAME OF FOSTER HOME _____ PERSON IN CHARGE _____

STREET ADDRESS _____ Phone # _____

CHECK YES or NO AS TO THE CONDITIONS IN THE HOME RELATING TO THE INSPECTION

- | | YES | NO |
|---|-------|-------|
| 1. The occupant utilizes UL listed extension cords. These cords shall not be substituted for permanent wiring and must be used only for portable appliances.
_____ N/A (Please check N/A if extension cords are not used in the home) | _____ | _____ |
| 2. A fire evacuation plan remains posted continually in a prominent location, and is visible to all residents and guests. | _____ | _____ |
| 3. The home has a working telephone which functions without use of electrical power and emergency numbers are posted within sight of the telephone.
(Please note wireless, cell, cable TV or internet connections are not acceptable). | _____ | _____ |
| 4. The home has at a minimum one battery operated smoke detector outside each sleeping area that is within 10 feet of each bedroom door, with at least one smoke detector on each level. | _____ | _____ |
| 5. All homes shall have at least one five-pound, ABC type fire extinguisher or CO ² type fire extinguisher located in the kitchen and an ABC type fire extinguisher or CO ² type fire extinguisher centrally located. | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Keyed dead bolts are not present on designated egress doors. | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Doors and windows in rooms used for sleeping open properly with little effort. | _____ | _____ |
| 8. All hallways, doorways, entrances, ramps, steps and corridors are unobstructed, free of storage, and readily accessible. | _____ | _____ |
| 9. Designate Primary heat source _____
Designate Second heat source (if applicable) _____ | | |
| 10. List any substandard components or hazards found which were not addressed above or which would require additional inspections.

_____ | | |

APPROVED _____

NOT APPROVED _____

INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE _____ TITLE _____ DATE _____

PRINT NAME OF INSPECTOR _____ PHONE # INSPECTOR _____

FOSTER PARENT'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Foster Parent's signature on this form indicates that he/she understands any item marked NO on this form will result in a non-approval of their home until the item(s) in question are brought into compliance with license regulations. This includes obtaining written reports of other inspectors if so indicated.

4B. Instructions for Fire Safety Inspection Report (DSS-1515)

- Confirm with your local fire department whether foster families should schedule inspections directly with them, or whether you should coordinate them for all foster families from your agency.
- Be sure the form is signed and dated by the fire inspector.
- Question 6, keyed dead bolts: This does not mean keyed dead bolts cannot be on some exit doors. The fire inspector can make a determination that certain doors are egress doors and certain doors are not. For those indicated egress, keyed dead bolts are not permitted.
- If any items on the DSS-1515 are not marked “Yes” the home cannot be licensed until these items are corrected.

Things to Remember for All Forms

- Fill in all required information, date all documents, and gather required signatures.
- All documents must be received by the Licensing Authority within 180 days of when they are signed and dated.
- To ensure your request is processed expediently, always use a copy of your turnaround DSS-5015.

5. Environmental Conditions Checklist (DSS-5150)

5A. Blank Copy of Form

Foster Home Environmental Conditions and Health Regulations Checklist

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Telephone: _____

	Yes	No
1) Home and yard are maintained, repaired, and are not hazardous to children in care.	_____	_____
2) The house is free of uncontrolled rodents and insects.	_____	_____
3) Windows and doors used for ventilation are screened.	_____	_____
4) The kitchen is equipped with an operable stove, refrigerator, and running water.	_____	_____
5) There are sufficient eating, cooking and drinking utensils to accommodate all household members.	_____	_____
6) Household equipment and furniture are in good repair.	_____	_____
7) Flammable and poisonous substances, medications, and cleaning materials are stored out of reach of children placed for foster care.	_____	_____
8) Explosive materials, ammunition and firearms are stored in separate locked places.	_____	_____
9) Documentation that household pets have been vaccinated for rabies is maintained by the foster parents.	_____	_____
10) Home has heating, air cooling or ventilating capability to maintain comfort range between 65° and 85° Fahrenheit.	_____	_____
11) Rooms including toilets, baths, and kitchens without operable windows have mechanical ventilation to outside.	_____	_____
12) Discussion of water quality, and sanitary toilet and bathing facilities held.	_____	_____
13) Discussion of Building Code held.	_____	_____

Remarks and recommendations:

Foster Parent Signature: _____

Social Worker Signature: _____

Social Worker Title: _____ Date: _____

5B. Instructions for the DSS-5150

- You can access the NC Building Code at <www.ncdoi.com>.
- Ask about and look for any structural problems with the home, such as a leaking roof or crumbling foundation.
- Ask about and look for any problems with systems such as heating, plumbing, septic, or electric.
- For water quality, ask about water testing that has been done and any history of problems with water quality or sanitation.
- You should not be recommending licensure if there is any question about an unsafe water supply or facilities.
- Check to be sure that the home has running water and clean toilet and bathing facilities.
- Inspect the yard, looking for potential dangers (such as dense brush, excessive or uncovered trash, etc.). Children need to be able to go outside and play safely.



A thorough environmental assessment includes the yard as well as the interior and exterior structure of the foster home.

- Check yard for “attractive hazards.” Any water source must be behind a fence. A pool must be fenced. Access from the yard to a river, stream, lake, ocean, sound, or other body of water must be blocked by a fence.
- There needs to be a safe, fenced play area provided if a dangerous object or hazard cannot be fenced.

Things to Remember for All Forms

- Fill in all required information, date all documents, and gather required signatures.
- All documents must be received by the Licensing Authority within 180 days of when they are signed and dated.
- To ensure your request is processed expediently, always use a copy of your turnaround DSS-5015.

6B. Instructions for Medical History Form (DSS-5017)

- Each adult in the home completes this form for himself or herself. Parents complete a form for each child.
- Alternatively, licensing professionals can interview the applicant to complete this form, which would provide additional opportunity for assessment and relationship building.
- Anyone who becomes a member of the household after licensure must complete this form.

Things to Remember for All Forms

- Fill in all required information, date all documents, and gather required signatures.
- All documents must be received by the Licensing Authority within 180 days of when they are signed and dated.
- To ensure your request is processed expediently, always use a copy of your turnaround DSS-5015.

7. Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156)

7A. Completed Example

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Children's Solutions

(Name of Agency Requesting Information)

In order to protect the agency/facility and the children who may reside in the family foster home or residential child care facility, the agency must obtain medical information on the person whose name appears below in order to be in compliance with licensure rules. The person named below has given the agency permission to obtain their medical report and to the release of information by the licensed medical provider, also named below.

I, Jane B. Smith, agree to the release of pertinent information by the licensed medical provider, Dr. Jackson. Date: 6/18/06

Name Jane B. Smith Age 49

Address 100 Smith Haven Drive, Charlotte, North Carolina 28215-0100

Height 5' 8" Weight 175 Blood Pressure 120/80 Pulse 74

History of Illnesses:	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Tuberculosis or other pulmonary defects	<u> </u>	<u>✓</u>	Fainting and dizzy spells	<u> </u>	<u>✓</u>
Venereal disease	<u> </u>	<u>✓</u>	Heart Trouble	<u> </u>	<u>✓</u>
Seizures	<u> </u>	<u>✓</u>	Serious defects of bones and joints	<u> </u>	<u>✓</u>
Mental or emotional disturbance	<u> </u>	<u>✓</u>	Other chronic or communicable diseases	<u> </u>	<u>✓</u>
Hypertension	<u> </u>	<u>✓</u>	Specify if yes: <u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Physical Examination (Circle all that were examined.)

Heart	Lungs	Abdomen	Genitalia
ENT	Extremities	Hernia	Eyes

Date of examination: June 18, 2006

Date of tuberculin skin test: June 18, 2006 Result: Positive Negative ✓

Date of chest X-ray*: Findings:

*(Required only if tuberculin test positive)

Please comment on any physical, mental or emotional condition or communicable/infectious disease apparent from your examination or any knowledge of the above-named person that might affect the health, safety or welfare of children residing in the home of facility:

Physician's, PA's or NP's Signature: _____ Date: 6/18/2006

Address: 576 Liberty Street, Charlotte, NC 28216 Phone: (704) 987-6543

7B. Instructions for Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156)

- Everyone in the home must have this form completed within 12 months of the initial licensing date and every other year thereafter.
- Be sure that the agency name is completed at the top of the form.
- The foster parent applicant and other adult members of household must sign and date the form, and write in the medical provider's name.
- All household members 18 years old and older in the home must have a TB test within 12 months of the initial licensing; if one member tests positive, everyone in the household must have a TB test. If anyone 18 years old or older moves into the home after a license has been issued, that new household member must have a TB test. A place for documenting the TB test is included on this form. However, a separate document from a licensed medical provider is also acceptable.
- The form must be signed at the bottom by a licensed medical provider (e.g., a doctor of medicine, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner).
- Do not fax this form without prior approval from a NC Division of Social Services licensing consultant.
- Anyone who becomes a member of the household after licensing will need to have this form completed.

Things to Remember for All Forms

- Fill in all required information, date all documents, and gather required signatures.
- All documents must be received within 180 days of dated documents, unless otherwise noted.
- To ensure your request is processed expediently, always use a copy of your turnaround DSS-5015.

8. Criminal History Check

8A. Notice to Foster Home of Mandatory Criminal History Check (DSS-5280)

**NOTICE
Foster Home
MANDATORY CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK**

NORTH CAROLINA LAW REQUIRES THAT A CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK BE CONDUCTED ON ALL PERSONS 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER WHO RESIDE IN A LICENSED FOSTER HOME.

"Criminal history" includes any county, State, and federal conviction of a felony by a court of competent jurisdiction or pending felony indictment of a crime for child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, a crime against a child, including child pornography, or for a crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide, other than physical assault or battery; a county, State, or federal conviction of a felony by a court of competent jurisdiction or a pending felony indictment for physical assault, battery, or a drug-related offense, if the offense was committed within the past five years; or similar crimes under federal law or under the laws of other states. Your fingerprints will be used to check the criminal history records of the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

If it is determined, based on your criminal history, that you are unfit to have a foster child reside with you, you shall have the opportunity to complete or challenge the accuracy of the information contained in the SBI or FBI identification records.

If licensure is denied or the foster home license is revoked by the Department of Health and Human Services as a result of the criminal history check, if you are a foster parent, or are applying to become a foster parent, you may request a hearing pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the Administrative Procedure Act.

Refusal to consent to a criminal history check is grounds for the Department to deny or revoke license to provide foster care. Any person who intentionally falsifies any information required to be furnished to conduct the criminal history is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

Signature of Applicant:

Date: _____

Signature of Adult Member of

Household: _____

Date: _____

8B. Sample of Fingerprint Clearance Letter

(To be submitted to Licensing Authority)



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services

2412 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2412

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Sherry S. Bradsher, Director
(919) 733-3055

May 26, 2004

To: MECKLENBURG COUNTY DSS

From: Sheryl McNeill
Licensing and Policy Team

Re: Applicants Name: XXXXX XXXXX
Facility ID Number:

DOB: 00/00/00
SSN: 000-00-0000

Pursuant to NCGS 131D-10.3A the above named individual has applied to be licensed as a foster parent. Two applicant fingerprint cards were submitted to the SBI Identification Section for a State and/or National criminal record check. Pursuant to State/Federal law/regulations, we are prohibited from releasing any actual data that may be maintained by the SBI and FBI. However, based on the results of the State and National criminal record check, this office has determined that:

The applicant **MEETS THE CRITERIA** for a foster parent under the above state statute.

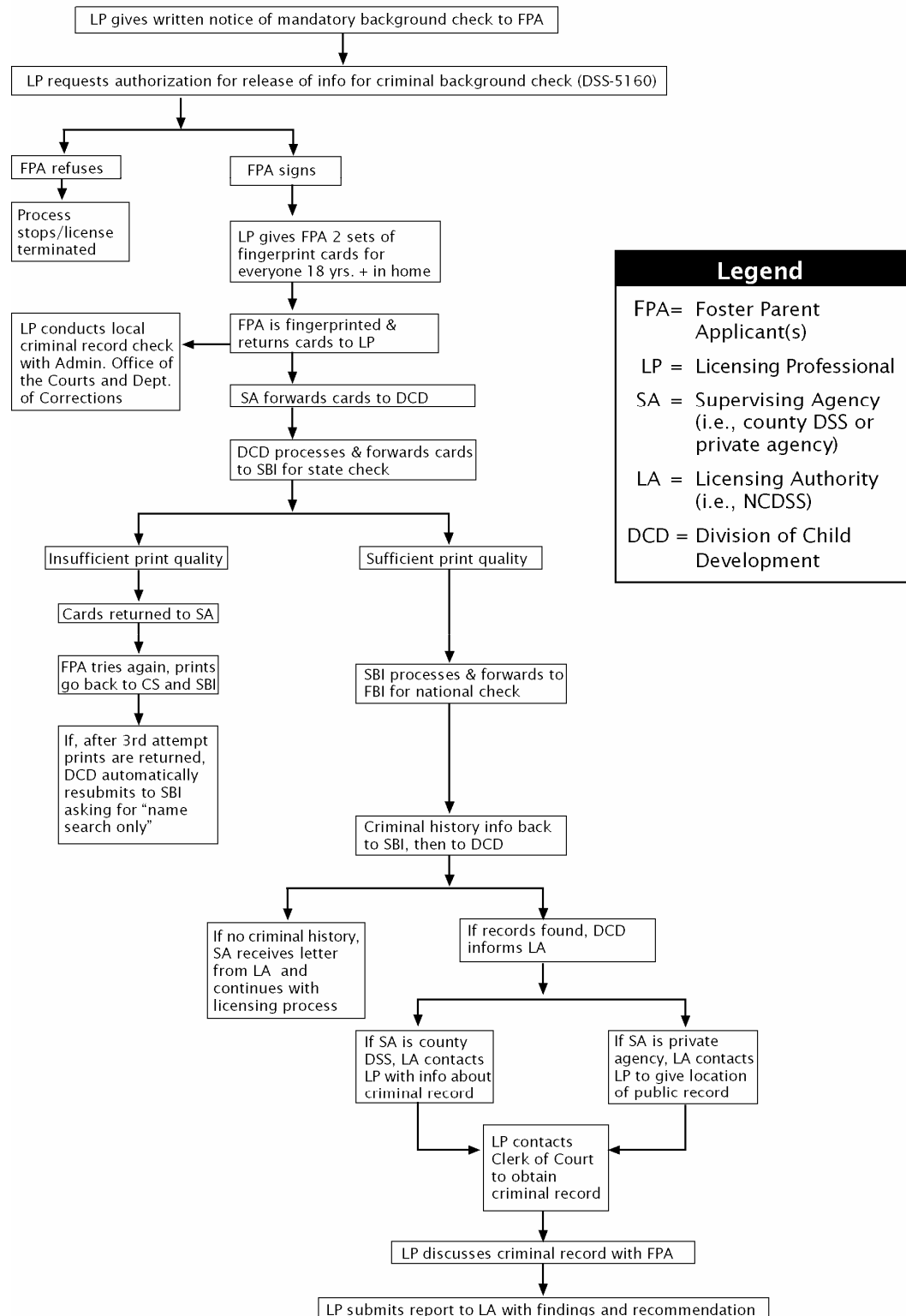
If the applicant does not meet the criteria and wishes to review the criminal history record information, he/she should write to:

State Bureau of Investigation
Identification Section
3320 Old Garner Road
Raleigh, NC 27626-0500

The SBI ID Section will inform the applicant how to obtain a copy of his/her identification record and, if necessary how to challenge the accuracy or completeness of that record. **PLEASE ENSURE THAT THE ABOVE-NAMED PERSON RECEIVES A COPY OF THIS FORM.**

8C. Diagram of Criminal Background Check Procedure

Criminal History Background Check



8D. Important Information for Criminal History Background Checks

Each agency needs to designate a staff person to coordinate criminal record checks and communicate with Division of Child Development (DCD).

Everyone in the foster home age 18 or over needs to have a criminal background check. This includes anyone who joins the household once the home is licensed. Have new members complete their checks when they join the household, rather than waiting for the next application process.

Foster home licenses are not issued until results are back from the criminal records check. The process generally takes one to two months. Therefore, it's important to have applicants get fingerprinted early in their MAPP/GPS pre-service training, to avoid holding up their applications.

Applicants shall not be licensed if they or any member of their household 18 years of age or older refuses to consent to a criminal history check. The form "Notice to Foster Parents of Mandatory Criminal History Check" (DSS-5280) checks must be provided to foster parents at initial licensure and relicensure. A current, signed copy of this form should be kept in the Supervising Agency's file for each adult household member.

Five Types of Background Checks

Required Background Checks

1. **Fingerprint Check.** Agency submits fingerprints to DCD for this check only once for each individual: before licensing and whenever a new adult becomes a member of the household.
2. **Local Criminal Records Check.** Agency conducts this check once before initial licensure and before all relicensures.
3. **Statewide Criminal Records Check.** Agency conducts this check once before initial licensure and before all relicensures.
4. **North Carolina Sex Offender & Public Protection Registry.** Agency conducts this check once before initial licensure and before all relicensures.
5. **Nurse Aide I and Health Care Personnel Registry.** Agency conducts this check once before initial licensure and before all relicensures.

For more details about these checks, see below.

1. FINGERPRINT CHECK

This is a record search your agency must conduct only once, before the foster parent is initially licensed. Fingerprint checks are often conducted by one designated person in each agency. The search must be conducted on each adult member of the household. Fingerprint cards need to have printed on them the statute number for criminal background checks and the name and address for the Division of Child

Development (DCD), which coordinates the search through the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI). The address is Division of Child Development, Criminal Records Check Unit, 2201 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2201. Check with your supervisor, as some agencies have cards pre-printed or get them directly from DCD.



It's important to have applicants fingerprinted early in their MAPP/GPS pre-service training, to avoid holding up their applications.

The Supervising Agency determines how its foster parent applicants get fingerprinted. Some agencies have a local law enforcement agency do the fingerprinting. Some agencies have their own staff do it. Contact your supervisor to find out how it is done in your agency.

Once they are imprinted, fingerprint cards are sent to the Division of Child Development. If the prints are unreadable, the DCD will let you know and the process must be repeated.

Unfortunately, the second and third time fingerprint cards are submitted they are read by hand and not by a computer. Each time can take up to six months. So in total, this process could take up to 18 months.

“Name Search Only” Criminal Record Checks

If a print is returned a third time by the SBI as unreadable, then DCD automatically re-submits it to the SBI asking for a “name search only” criminal records check.

There may be two other situations when the Licensing Authority would accept a name search only criminal records check.

1. A person may be physically unable to go for fingerprinting. In this case, a licensed physician documents that the person is permanently and completely disabled and must be under direct medical supervision to leave the house.
2. A person may not have readable prints. In this case, a fingerprinting authority certifies that the person could not be printed, even if charged with the crime of felony murder.

In either case, this information is sent to the Licensing Authority, which then writes a letter to DCD requesting that they do a name search only check. Please note that this is not an automatic procedure—the Licensing Authority makes this decision on a case-by-case basis.

2. LOCAL CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

This is a record search your agency must conduct once before licensing and then every two years thereafter.

In the case of initial licensure, while waiting for the fingerprint search to come back, you need to do a criminal records check by the applicant's name. Contact the Clerk of Superior Court at the courthouse in the county where the foster home is

located. Ask to do an AOC (Administrative Office of the Courts) record check of both the criminal and civil databases. (The criminal database includes both misdemeanor and felony arrests.) You will be asked to pay a fee. (Note: some county departments of social services have the capacity to do their own AOC checks.)

3. STATEWIDE DATABASE CHECK

This is a record search your agency must conduct once before licensing and then every two years thereafter. The North Carolina Department of Corrections web site has a statewide database that can also be checked by name <<http://www.doc.state.nc.us/offenders/>>. It contains information on anyone who has had a conviction or been on probation or parole. Click on “Offender Information - Public Search,” then click “Search for an Offender,” and enter the applicants’ names.

4. NC SEX OFFENDER AND PUBLIC PROTECTION REGISTRY

This registry <<http://ncfindoffender.com/>> provides information about individuals who are registered sex offenders in North Carolina, providing offender information such as name, age, hair and eye color, and date of birth. It also provides conviction information and address history.

5. NURSE AIDE I AND HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL REGISTRY

This registry can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week either by calling the Registry’s automated telephone voice response system (919/715-0562) or by accessing the Registry website (www.ncnar.org) and clicking on the “Verify Listings” link. Both verification systems use social security numbers to access records. Each look-up will provide information on whether an individual is listed on the Nurse Aide I Registry and the Health Care Personnel Registry and whether that person has been substantiated for any type of abuse while serving in this capacity.

Background Check Findings

NO CRIMINAL RECORD

If there is NO criminal record found, DCD will send a letter to the licensing professional stating that the applicant “meets criteria for licensing.” The worker needs to give the applicant a copy of the letter, and also submit a copy to the Licensing Authority with the licensure or re-licensure application.



According to federal confidentiality laws, the conviction or charges cannot be discussed with the foster parent until the public criminal record is obtained.

WHEN A CRIMINAL RECORD IS FOUND

Notification. If there is a criminal record found, the DCD informs the Licensing Authority, and the Licensing Authority informs the licensing professional.

- Public Supervising Agencies. Based on an agreement with the Dept. of Justice, the Licensing Authority can provide specifics of the criminal history **only** to county departments of social services. So licensing professionals at county departments of social services will be told the type of criminal record or charge, and the date and location of the incident.
- Private Supervising Agencies. Licensing professionals at a private agency, on the other hand, can be told only where to find the public record; the worker is responsible for obtaining the specifics from the record.

Contacting Clerk of Court. The licensing professional, whether at a public or private agency, then contacts the Clerk of Court, in whatever county the initial criminal activity was recorded, to get a copy of the public criminal record. According to federal confidentiality laws, the conviction or charges cannot be discussed with the foster parent until the public criminal record is obtained. Also, in some cases the worker will need the full public record in order to know whether a charge resulted in any convictions.

The foster parent applicant has the right to obtain the public criminal record directly by sending a written request to the State Bureau of Investigation.

ELIGIBILITY WHEN A CRIMINAL RECORD IS FOUND

Applicants are ineligible for licensure if they or a member of their household:

- Has ever been convicted of a **felony** involving:
 - (1) Child abuse or neglect;
 - (2) Spouse abuse;
 - (3) A crime against a child or children (including child pornography);
 - (4) A crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault, or homicide but not including other physical assault or battery, or
- Has within the last five years been convicted of a **felony** involving:
 - (1) Physical assault;
 - (2) Battery; or
 - (3) A drug-related offense.

All other applicants (and members of their households) with criminal records may be considered for licensure. However, Supervising Agencies must weigh the following factors when considering whether to recommend applicants with criminal records for licensure: (1) nature of the crime; (2) length of time since the conviction; (3) circumstances surrounding the commission of the offense or offenses; (4) number and type of prior offenses; (5) evidence of rehabilitation; and (6) age of the individual at the time of the commission of the offense or offenses.

ENDING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

In some cases, even if an applicant is technically eligible for licensure, his or her criminal record may be so serious that the Supervising Agency decides not to proceed with licensure based on the criminal record search, and subsequently

contacts the Licensing Authority to discuss withdrawal or possible denial of the application.

In the case of a foster parent going through re-licensing, the Supervising Agency may request that the Licensing Authority revoke the license of the foster home, based on a new criminal record.



Supervising Agencies can make a recommendation on licensure, but they do not actually license foster parents.

IF YOU WANT TO PURSUE A LICENSE DESPITE A CRIMINAL RECORD

If the agency wishes to recommend licensure or re-licensure in spite of the applicant's criminal record, the worker should meet with the adults in question to discuss it. After a two-level staffing of the case, a written recommendation from the agency executive director needs to be submitted to the Licensing Authority. The letter needs to state the details of the criminal record, why the agency is recommending licensure in spite of the criminal record, and why the record no longer poses a concern for the adult's ability to care for children in foster care. This letter is in the public domain, so the executive should write this letter as if it will be printed in the local newspaper.

Following are some of the things that might be considered by an agency and included in a letter recommending licensure:

- The nature, magnitude, frequency, and duration of the crime; be sure to note whether the crime is non-violent in nature.
- The age of the foster parent when the crime occurred and the length of time since it occurred.
- Rehabilitation efforts, increased self-awareness, or enhanced understanding of the criminal behavior since the crime took place.
- Evidence of a change in habits and attitude and, when appropriate, of successful treatment, as in the case of a history of substance abuse.
- Reasons the foster parent did not share the information (if applicable).

Supervising Agencies can make a recommendation on licensure, but they do not actually license foster parents. The Licensing Authority makes the final decision whether to approve the license. In the case of applicants with a criminal record, the Licensing Authority will consider each request on its merits. Safety for children in foster care will always be the top priority. Children, birth families, and the community all need to feel confident that the state is diligently protecting children in its care. There are some crimes which would automatically preclude someone from becoming a foster parent. In other cases, however, people who have made mistakes in their past can sometimes show convincing evidence that they have changed their lives and are ready to contribute to society in this important way. The Supervising Agency will need to carefully assess each situation and present an honest and complete picture for the Licensing Authority to make its decision.

Time Frame for Processing Fingerprint Check	
DCD clerk enters information into Automated Criminal Records Check Tracking System, separates cards by adoptive and foster parent applications, and puts into envelopes to be hand-delivered to the SBI. <i>Approximately 2 days/delivered to SBI 2-3 times per week</i>	
SBI enters information into their billing system and searches names for any outstanding warrants. Prints are then scanned electronically for quality control and matching to any existing records in the state's system. Next, the fingerprint cards are formatted and sent electronically to the FBI. SBI places cards in a "Pending" file to await results from the FBI. <i>Approximately 6 workdays, depending on volume</i>	
FBI searches national database for criminal records. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If results can be sent electronically back to the SBI: <i>24 to 48 hours</i>• If results cannot be sent electronically: <i>4-6 weeks, longer if high volume or records are found</i>	
If FBI rejects fingerprints, they send them back by mail to the SBI. Additional sets of fingerprints cannot be submitted electronically to the FBI. For second or third sets of prints: <i>3-4 months from date of submission to SBI</i>	

9. Agency Foster Parent Agreement (DSS-1796)

9A. Blank Copy of Form

AGENCY/FOSTER PARENTS AGREEMENT

In consideration of mutual obligations and in order to promote a clear understanding of the factors involved in providing foster care, the following agreement is being entered into by **Foster Parent(s):** _____ and **Supervising Agency:** _____.

THE FOSTER PARENTS AGREE:

- to allow the representative of the supervising agency to visit the home in conjunction with licensing procedures, foster care planning, and placement;
- to accept children into the home only through the supervising agency and not through other individuals, agencies, or institutions;
- to treat a child placed in the home as a member of the family, and when so advised by the agency, to make every effort to support, encourage, and enhance the child's relationship with the child's parents or guardian;
- to maintain continuous contact and exchange of information between the supervising agency and the foster parents about matters affecting the adjustment of any child placed in the home. The foster parents shall agree to keep these matters confidential and to discuss them only with supervising agency staff members, or with other professional people designated by the agency;
- to obtain the permission of the supervising agency if the child is to be out of the home for a period exceeding two nights;
- to report to the agency any changes in the composition of the household, change of address, or change in the employment status of any adult member of the household;
- to make no independent plans for a child to visit the home of the child's birth parents, guardian, or relatives without prior consent from the supervising agency;
- to adhere to the agency's plan of medical care, both for routine care and treatment and for emergency care and hospitalization;
- to provide any child placed in the home with supervision at all times while the child is in the home, not leave the child unsupervised, and adhere to the supervision requirements specified in the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement or Person-Centered Plan;
- to cooperate with the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement or Person-Centered Plan.

THE SUPERVISING AGENCY AGREES:

- to assume responsibility for the overall planning for the child as specified by the parent or guardian or custodian, and to assist the foster parents in meeting their day-to-day responsibilities toward the child;
- to inform the foster parents concerning the agency's procedures and financial responsibility for obtaining medical care and hospitalization;
- to pay the foster parents a per diem rate of \$_____. This payment includes room and board, and payment for therapeutic services (if therapeutic foster parent) and other payments (specify)_____;
- to discuss with the foster parents any plans to remove a child from the family foster home, and to give the foster parents notice before removing a child from the foster home;
- to visit the family foster home and child according to the Out-Of-Home Family Services Agreement or Person-Centered Plan, and to be available to give needed services and consultation concerning the child's welfare;
- to respect the foster parents' preferences in terms of sex, age range, and number of children placed in the home;
- to provide or arrange for training for the foster parents;
- to include foster parents as part of the decision-making team for a child; and
- to allow foster parents to review and receive copies of their licensing record.

Other Provisions:

Signatures: We have read the foregoing statements and have retained a copy of this document.

Foster Parent: _____ Date: _____ Foster Parent: _____ Date: _____

Foster Parent: _____ Date: _____ Foster Parent: _____ Date: _____

Child Placing Agency Representative: _____ Date: _____

Signature and Title

CHAPTER 4

RELICENSURE PROCESS AND FORMS

In This Chapter

- The Relicensure Process
 - Sample Scheduling Planner for Relicensure
 - The Perfect Relicense Package
 - If You Miss the Deadline
 - Submitting Materials After the Deadline
 - Relicensing After Termination in Good Standing
-

Relicensing is vitally important work. Careful attention to relicensing guarantees children receive the care they deserve, ensures foster parents are supported and their skills are maintained, and fulfills the legal and ethical responsibilities of the Supervising Agency.

Licensing professionals are the ones who make the relicensing process meaningful. Submitting a relicensing package to the Licensing Authority is a way of saying that your agency and the foster family in question have taken a fresh look at the family's capacity and willingness to foster, and that together you have decided that they are well-equipped to care for children. Your agency's documentation of this process should reflect this: licensing professionals should take special care to ensure that the wording in the relicensing package recognizes and reflects foster parent cooperation in the relicensing process.



The relicensure package you submit is small—only three documents—but the Licensing Authority recognizes that it represents a LOT of work!

The Relicensure Process

Following are some of the steps in the relicensure process:

- Send the family a reminder letter and documents that they will need to complete: Fire Safety Form (DSS-1515) and Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156). Also remind them about completing their training requirement.

- Place reminder phone calls to family to be sure they are meeting their training requirement and have made necessary fire inspection and medical appointments to complete forms.
- Schedule visits with family.
- Complete updated summary of mutual home assessment. This should include a brief summary of their two years of fostering, any changes in the household or sleeping arrangements, an update of family's strengths and needs and what's being done to meet their needs, as well as a list of quarterly visits and a recommendation for continued licensure.
- Conduct new criminal background checks on all adults in the home. See the previous chapter for more information on this process.
- Visit the family to complete and collect forms, verify that 20 hours of training have been completed, and share the updated summary. Ensure pets have current vaccinations (if applicable).
- Mail necessary documents to the Licensing Authority.
- Keep remaining documents on file in your agency.

Other important things to keep in mind about the relicensing process include:

The 180-Day Rule. All of the re-licensing materials must be received by the Licensing Authority within 180 days of when they are signed and dated. The only exception to this is the medical examination—these can be dated up to twelve months before the packet is received by the Licensing Authority.

Timeframes. Given the 24 month licensure period, the Licensing Authority is not flexible about receiving relicensure materials. The relicensure packet is due prior to the date the license expires.

Recordkeeping. Most of the documents created during the relicensure process stay in your agency. Please remember that your agency is subject to monitoring and audits to ensure that your process and recordkeeping are in compliance with North Carolina's licensing rules. The following list indicates which documents are sent on to the Licensing Authority and which should be kept on file in your agency.

Relicensing Documents	
<u>Stays in Your Agency File</u>	<u>Send to Licensing Authority</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of all items sent to the LA • Reminder Letter to Foster Parents • Agency Foster Parent Agreement • Summary of the past two years of licensure • Copy of all criminal record check results • Discipline Agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover letter • Foster Care Facility License Action Request (DSS-5015) • Relicense, Change, and Termination Request Application (DSS-5157) • Fire Safety Form (DSS-1515) • Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156) • Environmental Conditions Checklist (DSS-5150)

Tips for a Successful Relicensure Process

- START EARLY!
- Always send a cover letter including your contact information
- Relicensing material must be submitted in a single package
- Fill in all required information, date all documents, and gather required signatures
- Document required ongoing training on Foster Care Facility License Action Request (DSS-5015)
- Relicense applications will be accepted up to 2 months prior to end of licensure period
- Please do not fax any documents without prior approval from a licensing consultant

Advice from a foster parent:

Timely, friendly reminders help make relicensing easier. It would also be helpful to receive a check list of the necessary forms and contact information, especially for fire inspection.

In addition, you may wish to consult the “Family-Friendly Checklist for Licensing and Relicensing” in the Appendix (item P).

Sample Scheduling Planner for Relicensure

Dates	Activities	Check off / Dates done
1. Six Months prior to end of licensure: <i>write in date</i>	Send your family a reminder letter and necessary documents	
	Reminder letter sent (with necessary contact information)	
	Fire Safety form (DSS-1515) sent	
	Request for Medical Information form (DSS-5156) sent	
2. Five Months prior to end of licensure <i>write in date</i>	Reminder phone calls	
	"Are your pet vaccinations up-to-date?"	
	"Have you scheduled your physicals?"	
	"Have you had your required in-service training?"	
3. Four Months prior to end of licensure <i>write in date</i>	Schedule visits with foster family	
	Phone call to schedule visit	
	"Got your physicals scheduled yet?"	
	"Completed your in-service training yet?"	
4. Three Months prior to end of licensure <i>write in date</i>	Visit the family	
	Complete the Environmental and Health Regulations Conditions Check List (DSS-5150) and get it signed	
	Complete the Re-licensure Check List (DSS-5157) and have it ready to be signed	
	Review and have each foster parent sign the Discipline Agreement , provide foster parent(s) a copy & keep a copy in the file	
	Review and have each foster parent sign the Agency Foster Parent Agreement (DSS-1796) , provide foster parent a copy & keep a copy in the file	
	Share the updated summary of the Mutual Home Assessment with the family	
	"Got your physicals yet?" (last chance)	
	"Got your inspection yet?" (last chance)	
5. Two Months prior to end of licensure	Collect all documents and mail appropriate ones to Licensing Authority	
	Complete DSS-5015	
	Complete DSS-5157, with all required signatures	
	Review Medicals for dates and signature	
	Review Fire Safety Report for dates and signatures	
	Review Environmental Checklist for dates and signatures	
	Complete Cover letter	
	Mail Packet with documents above to Licensing Authority	
	Pat yourself on the back for a job well done!	

The Perfect Relicense Package

The box below contains a list of the documents that should be in a “perfect” relicense application package. Since a sample of the DSS-5015 is included in Chapter 3, one is not provided here. However, on the following page you will find a sample of the DSS-5157 for relicensing.

The Perfect Relicense Package
<p>Send to Licensing Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cover letter• Foster Care Facility License Action Request (DSS-5015)• Relicense, Change, and Termination Request Application (DSS-5157)- <i>complete Part I</i>• Fire Safety Form (DSS-1515)• Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156)• Environmental Conditions Checklist (DSS-5150) <p>Keep in Agency foster parent file:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A copy of all items sent to the LA• Agency Foster Parent Agreement (DSS-1796) with signature(s)• Discipline Agreement• Summary of the past two years of licensure• A copy of all criminal record checks

The Relicense, Change and Termination Request Application Form (DSS-5157)

Signatures: For a relicense application, signatures are needed from at least one foster parent, the agency social worker, and the executive director or his or her designee (someone from the agency authorized to commit the resources and reputation of the agency). For terminations, signatures of the agency social worker and at least one foster parent are required. In the event that a foster parent is not available to sign, please indicate the reasons as stated in item 2 on the form. To make a change, the signature of the agency social worker only is required.

1. Foster Home Relicense, Termination, and Change Request Application (DSS-5157)

FOSTER HOME RELICENSE, TERMINATION AND CHANGE REQUEST APPLICATION

Attach: Cover Letter and a copy of DSS-5015 License Action Request form for all requests

Print Foster Parent(s) Name(s): _____ / _____
 _____ / _____ Facility ID#: _____

I. Relicense Application *(foster parent, licensing social worker, and agency head/designee signatures required)*

1. Background Checks, must be completed on each foster parent and each adult (18 years old and up)

Name of Each Adult in the Home: _____ / _____ _____ / _____ _____ / _____		
Type of Background Check Findings: <i>document new charges in Cover Letter as needed</i>	Check Conducted <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date Conducted Date :
Local Court Record Checked by Agency Staff Findings:		
NC Department of Corrections Offender Information http://www.doc.state.nc.us/offenders/ Findings:	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date:
NC Sex Offender and Public Protection Registry http://ncfindoffender.com/ Findings:	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date:
Nurse Aide I and Health Care Personnel Registry https://www.ncnar.org/faq.html Findings:	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Date:
Child Abuse or Neglect Reported: Substantiation: <input type="checkbox"/> YES , Date of Substantiation: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	

2. Background checks above completed on any *new* adult(s) in the home (18 years old and up) and Fingerprint Clearance letter **attached**. ☐ YES ☐ NO
3. Each foster parent received the required 20 hours of in-service training, documentation in agency file? ☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Each foster parent received the required training in First Aid, CPR, Universal Precautions and Medication Administration prior to initial placement? ☐ YES ☐ NO
5. On file is a summary of fostering experience for past 2 years, including changes in the household, bedroom arrangements, an assessment of strengths and needs demonstrated by foster parents and steps taken to meet needs identified, dates and locations of quarterly visits, and recommendation regarding licensure. ☐ YES
6. Foster parents using physical restraint holds receive required training prior to use of physical restraint holds? ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A
7. Annual written approval to use physical restraint holds from the Executive Director provided to foster parent and placed in file? ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A
8. Therapeutic foster parents have received additional training within 1st year of licensure as required by 10A NCAC 70E .1117 (3) (a-e). ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

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9. Total number of children in the home. **Complete Each Blank.**

- _____ # foster parents minor children including birth, adoptive, guardian
 _____ # relative children
 _____ # non-relative children (do not count foster children or daycare children)
 _____ # In-Home Daycare License Capacity, **attach copy of license**
 _____ # Community Alternative Program (CAP) clients in the home
 _____ # foster care license capacity as printed on most current DSS-5015
 _____ Total of numbers above

10. Required forms **Attached?**

- DSS-5156 Request for Medical Information ☐ YES ☐ NO
 DSS-1515 Fire Safety Inspection Report ☐ YES ☐ NO
 DSS-5150 Environmental Conditions and Health Regulations Checklist ☐ YES ☐ NO

11. Required forms reviewed, signed, a copy retained in agency foster parent file and given to foster parent(s)?

- Discipline Agreement ☐ YES ☐ NO
 DSS-1796 Agency/ Foster Parent Agreement ☐ YES ☐ NO

12. Waiver of licensure rule previously granted? ☐ YES ☐ NO

13. Waiver of licensure rule being requested? If YES attach DSS-5199 Waiver Request Form ☐ YES ☐ NO

II. License Termination Request (social worker and foster parent signature required)

1. Please Terminate this license effective: _____

Reason for Termination: ☐ Adopted ☐ No longer desires to foster ☐ Other obligations

2. If foster parent is NOT available for signature, indicate reason below.

☐ Moved ☐ No reply to agency attempts to contact ☐ Other: _____

Document Attempts to Contact: _____

III. License Change Request (social worker signature required)

1. Desired Effective Date _____

2. Please Change Capacity to: _____ **Complete Part I. #9 above.**

Document Sleeping Arrangements

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS CHART	Bed Type / Occupant(s)	Bed Type / Occupant(s)	Bed Type / Occupant(s)	Bed Type / Occupant(s)
Example Bedroom 0.	Queen / Mr. & Mrs. Applicant	Crib/1 foster child		
Bedroom 1.				
Bedroom 2.				
Bedroom 3.				
Bedroom 4.				
Bedroom 5.				

Is request for total number of children in a family foster home to be greater than 5? ☐ YES ☐ NO

If 'YES' document the following in your cover letter:

The capacity change request is to allow siblings to remain together; Verification that the out-of-home family services agreement for each sibling specifies the children shall be placed together; Assessment of the skill, stamina, and ability of foster parent(s) to care for the children.

3. Please change Age Range from : _____ to _____
4. Please change Address to: _____
Attach DSS-1515 Fire Inspection, **DSS-5150** Environmental Checklist. **Complete** Sleeping Arrangements Chart.
5. Please add to the household: Name _____ Relationship to foster parent(s) _____
Complete: Sleeping Arrangements Chart & **I. (9)** above. **Attach:** **DSS-5017** Medical History Form, **DSS-5156** Request for Medical Information
- New HH member 18yo or up? ☐ YES ☐ NO
 If 'YES' **Complete I. (1)** Background Check Table; **Attach** FPrint Clearance Letter & TB tests results;
Complete DSS-5280 Notice Mandatory Criminal History Check (keep a copy in file & provide a copy to new household member)
6. Please change from: ☐ **Therapeutic to Family Foster Care; Complete I. (9) above.**
7. Please change from: ☐ **Family Foster Care to Therapeutic; Complete I. (9) above.**
 Foster parent(s) have received additional 10 hours of required pre-service training, and agree(s) to receive additional training within 1st year of licensure as a therapeutic foster parent(s) as required by 10A NCAC 70E .1117 (3) (a-e). ☐ YES ☐ NO
8. Please remove (Foster Parent – *signature required below*) Name: _____
 (Adult Household Member) Name: _____
 Document reason: _____
9. Other: Please change DSS-5015 field _____ from _____ to _____

FAMILY FOSTER HOME RELICENSURE, TERMINATION AND CHANGE REQUEST CERTIFICATION

We certify that agency staff has reviewed this application and confirm that the home is in compliance with all rules and policies governing foster home licensure. We understand that according to GS 131D-10.6C this information may be furnished to others upon proper request.

 Signature of Social Worker Telephone Number

 Print Name of Social Worker Date

 Signature of Foster Parent Date

 Signature of Supervisor, Program Admin or Agency Head

 Print Name of Sup, Program Admin or Agency Head Date

 Signature of Foster Parent Date

If You Miss the Deadline

If there are children in the home. If there are children in a home but relicensing paperwork has not been received by the Licensing Authority by the 24-month deadline, the license is terminated and the placement becomes illegal. When this happens, the custodians of the child become legally liable for the child's safety and well-being. Licensing professionals and their supervisors may also be held personally liable, which means that their personal assets (house, car, savings) could be at risk. To avoid this liability, Supervising Agencies usually take one of the following actions:

- Move the child to a licensed placement. Although this solution eliminates the legal vulnerability, it risks inflicting further trauma on a child, especially if the placement is stable and there is a bond between the child and his or her foster parents.
- Ask a court to make this (currently) unlicensed placement the court-ordered placement for the child. Although this solution eliminates legal vulnerability, it also means that in most cases federal or state funds cannot be used to pay for the care of the child.

All this underscores the importance of submitting relicensing materials in a timely fashion.

Submitting Materials After the Deadline

Within One Year. When a foster home license is terminated for failure to submit relicensure materials, the home may be relicensed if the materials are submitted to the Licensing Authority within one year of the date the license was terminated. If approved, the new license will be issued effective the date the licensing materials are received by the Licensing Authority.

After One Year. After one year, the foster family will have to submit a new licensure application to be considered for relicensure.

Special Training Considerations. Previously licensed foster parents who have not been licensed within the last 24 consecutive months must demonstrate to the Supervising Agency that they have continued mastery of the 12 skills. The Supervising Agency, in turn, must document this fact for the Licensing Authority.

If the previously licensed foster parents cannot demonstrate mastery of all 12 skills, they must retake the 30 hours of pre-service training. Previously licensed therapeutic foster parents must also demonstrate continued mastery of the therapeutic skills or retake the 10-hour therapeutic pre-service training. The Supervising Agency must also provide documentation to the Licensing Authority that trainings for first aid, CPR, and universal precautions are updated.

Relicensing After Termination in Good Standing

When a license has been terminated in good standing before the end of the foster family's current licensure period, and the foster family wishes to be licensed again, the license may be renewed. The period of time for this renewed license will be from the date the request is received by the Licensing Authority to the end date of the license period in effect when the license was terminated.

The following example illustrates how this works: The Smith family's licensure period is from December 2005 through December 2007. In January 2007 they decide not to foster anymore and their license is terminated. In May 2007 the foster parents tell their Supervising Agency that they have had a change of mind, and wish to be licensed again. In this instance, the Supervising Agency must submit the following to the Licensing Authority:

- Cover letter
- DSS-5157 with Part III Change Section (Other) completed requesting reinstatement of the license (required signatures on the DSS-5157 are the same as for a relicensure)

If the Licensing Authority approves the request, the certification period would be May 2007 through December 2007.

CHAPTER 5**MAKING CHANGES**

In This Chapter

- Things to Remember When Making Changes
 - The Perfect Change Package
 - If You Have Questions
-

During the two year licensing period, all families experience change. Some are so significant that Supervising Agencies must inform the Licensing Authority about them so that the license can be modified to reflect the change. Changes of this nature include:

- Change in the capacity of a home (e.g., adding an extra bedroom)
- Change in family membership (e.g., a foster parent leaves due to divorce)
- Change in residence (i.e., the family moves)
- Change from foster care to therapeutic foster care

In the case of the above changes, as long as the change complies with minimum licensing standards, the license may be changed during the time it is in effect.

One change that cannot be made under the same license is the move from a foster home license to a residential child-care facility license. To make this switch, the foster home license must be terminated and a new application made to become a licensed residential child-care facility.

Things to Remember When Making Changes

- **Cover Letter.** Always send a cover letter including your contact information.
- **Timeframe.** Changes should be submitted within **60 days** of the change.
- **Documentation.** Fill in all required information and date all documents. The only signature required for changes is the licensing professional's. Remember to enter the desired effective date of the change you are requesting.
- **Fax.** *DO NOT FAX* any documents without prior approval from a licensing consultant.
- **Retroactive Changes.** Some changes to a family's license (e.g., regarding the age range, number of children in the home, or gender of the children in the home) may be made after the change has taken place. However, to avoid difficulties with reimbursement of foster parents, retroactive changes should be submitted to the Licensing Authority as soon as possible.
- **Filling out the DSS-5157.** Complete Part III of this form where applicable.

The Perfect Change Package

In case of the following changes, licensing professionals should complete a change application and submit it to the Licensing Authority.

- Change in the capacity of a home
- Change in age range and gender of children for placement
- Adding a family household member
 - *Note: If you are adding someone as a licensed foster parent, do not use a change packet. Instead, a new application, Foster Home License Application DSS-5016, and all required forms for licensure must be submitted to the Licensing Authority.*
- Removing a family household member or foster parent
- Change in residence
- Change from foster care to therapeutic foster care
- Change from therapeutic foster care to foster care

A description of the “perfect” packet for any of these changes can be found below. Although samples of these forms have been provided in earlier chapters, for your convenience we have included on the following page a sample of the Relicense, Change, and Termination Request (DSS-5157) which is required for all changes. Signature on DSS-5157 for changes: Please note that for a change, the signature of the licensing professional (licensing social worker) only is required.

The Perfect Change Package

- Cover letter
- Foster Care Facility License Action Request (DSS-5015)
Mark changes in INK on the DSS-5015
- Relicense, Change, and Termination Request Application (DSS-5157) – complete Part III as applicable.

Change of Address

- Fire Safety Inspection Report (DSS-1515)
- Environmental Conditions Checklist (DSS-5150)

Adding an Adult Household Member

- Medical History Form (DSS-5017) & TB tests (if 18 of age or older)
- Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156)
- Document new member's relationship to foster parent on the cover letter
- Fingerprint clearance letter, all other required criminal record searches kept in agency file

Change from Foster Care to Therapeutic Foster Care

- Remember: Document training received for providing mental health services
- Remember : Complete Part I (8) for this change

Change in Capacity

- Remember: Complete Sleeping Arrangement Chart on DSS-5157
- Remember: Complete Part I. (8) for all capacity changes

Removing a Household Member or Foster Parent

- To remove a household member or foster parent document the reason on the DSS-5157 & the cover letter
- To remove a household member who is not a foster parent, their signature is not required.
- To remove a licensed foster parent who wishes to terminate their foster parent status, their signature is required on the DSS-5157. Document the reason for their decision; and an explanation if they are not available to sign.

If You Have Questions

Please contact the Licensing Authority for guidance or consultation: 828/669-3388.

CHAPTER 6**TRANSFERRING A LICENSE****In This Chapter**

- The Transfer Process
- The Perfect Transfer Package
- Timeframes
- Things to Remember When Transferring a License

Occasionally foster parents request to be supervised and supported by a Supervising Agency other than their current one. This request is called a transfer. Technically, the term “transfer” is only partially correct. When a foster family transfers from one Supervising Agency to another their current license is terminated and they are reinstated with the new agency, receiving a new facility identification number. For a discussion of the ethical issues surrounding transfers, see the ethics portion of Chapter 8, “Critical Practice Issues.”

Transferring a license requires two administrative actions.

1. **Termination.** The agency that has been supervising the foster parents must fill out a DSS-5015 to ask the Licensing Authority to terminate the foster parents’ license. They pass this on to the new agency, which submits it as part of the transfer package.
2. **Reinstatement.** The agency that the foster parents are transferring to must request that a license be issued to the foster parents with their agency listed as the Supervising Agency. The foster parents receive a new facility ID number, but retain their current licensure period.

The Transfer Process

The transfer process is fairly straightforward. Once the foster parents have talked with the new agency and that agency has expressed a desire to supervise them, the transfer must take place within 90 days of the foster parent’s request. It is imperative that the custodians of any children in the home be notified by both agencies of this change to allow for a seamless transition of services for the foster family and children placed in the home. The transfer process involves the following three steps.

1. Foster parents sign a release form indicating their desire to transfer to another agency. Ideally the foster parents will discuss with their current agency the reasons they wish to transfer.
2. When requested to do so the current agency will provide the following to the receiving agency:
 - Most recent mutual home assessment
 - Documentation of training
 - Other licensure forms (e.g., fire inspection, environmental checklist, TB test records, etc.)
 - A cover letter about the transfer. The letter should state whether there are foster children in the home. If there are foster children in the home, the cover letter should indicate that the custodians of the children have been notified of the transfer.
 - A Foster Care Facility License Action Request DSS-5015 turnaround (preprinted by the state) marked “terminate” in ink
3. The new agency must do the following:
 - Complete a brief mutual home assessment demonstrating the agency is familiar with the family and aware of their skills and abilities
 - Complete a cover letter about the transfer. The letter should state whether there are foster children in the home. If there are foster children in the home, the cover letter should indicate that the custodians of the children have been notified of the transfer.
 - A new Foster Care Facility License Action Request DSS-5015 completed by the new agency with current information
 - If applicable, a relicensure packet
 - If the family has moved, be sure to include an address change packet



Best Practice Tip: When foster parents want to transfer to another agency, the original Supervising Agency should provide them with a release to sign.

The Perfect Transfer Package

If foster parents are transferring from another agency to your agency you must complete a “perfect transfer package.” The contents of this package are described in the box below.

The Perfect Transfer Package

- Cover letter from the new agency
- Cover letter from previous agency
- New DSS-5015 – Foster Care Facility License Action Request from the new agency
- Turnaround DSS-5015 from previous agency
- A Brief Mutual Home Assessment by the new agency

Timeframes

If all paperwork is complete, transfer requests received on or by the 20th of the month will be effective on the first day of the same month. For example; if a complete transfer package is received on May 11, the license will terminate from the previous agency on April 30, and be effective with the new agency on May 1.

Any packets received or complete after the 20th will be effective with the new agency on the first day of the following month. For example; if a packet is received on May 25, the license will terminate from the previous agency on May 30 and be effective with the new agency on June 1.

The Licensing Authority strongly encourages the foster family’s “old” and “new” Supervising Agencies to work in partnership during the transfer process. It is imperative that the custodians of any children in the home are notified of this change by both agencies. Agencies need to have an understanding and agree when the transfer is to take place, to allow a seamless transition for the foster family and continued services for any child that is in the home.

Things to Remember When Transferring a License

- New agency should gather required information and send in **as one single packet**
- If you are requesting a foster home become therapeutic, include documentation that all caregivers have received the additional training to provide therapeutic services
- If the licensure period ends the same month as the transfer, as relicensure packet must also be completed
- Be sure that the foster parents are aware that they will receive two separate letters from the Licensing Authority, one stating that their original license has been terminated and one with their new license number

CHAPTER 7

ENDING THE LICENSING RELATIONSHIP

In This Chapter

- Termination
 - Revocation
 - Appeals
 - Termination/Revocation in the Context of an Investigative Assessment
 - The Perfect Termination/Revocation Package
 - Frequently Asked Questions
-

This chapter will discuss the different ways the licensing relationship can end. It will tell you about termination, the most cooperative—and thus more preferred—method of ending the licensing relationship. It will also tell you about revocation, which is often a contentious, complex process that can be appealed by foster parents. Perhaps most importantly, it will tell when and why to use each method of ending the licensing relationship.

Termination

Foster home licenses are issued for a two-year period. If all the relicensing materials have not been received by the Licensing Authority by the end of that two-year period, the license will automatically terminate. In other words, the license terminates if it is not renewed.

Terminations can also be requested from the Licensing Authority when the Supervising Agency and the foster family mutually agree it will be in everyone's best interest. In more detail, here are four ways that terminations generally take place.

Common Termination Scenarios

1. Mutual agreement

The request to terminate a license must be a mutual decision between the foster parents and Supervising Agency. There are various reasons the decision to terminate a license may be reached: a family may not be able to fulfill the

obligations of fostering due to other life obligations; they may no longer desire to foster; or maybe they have adopted a child. In these types of circumstances it is good to come to a mutual agreement to end the licensure relationship, and submit a termination packet that documents the reason for termination. Submitting a termination packet will also provide an opportunity to document any concerns noted while the family was licensed.



It's very important to follow the necessary time line so that homes do not become unavailable due to late paperwork.

2. No reply to attempts to contact

The Supervising Agency may have extreme difficulty contacting the foster family, giving the agency strong, indirect evidence that the family no longer wishes to foster. Examples of convincing, indirect evidence of a family's disinterest in continuing to foster include moving without telling the agency and ignoring the agency's repeated efforts to contact them. In these cases, it is best practice to send a certified letter to the family documenting your attempts to contact them and informing them that if they do not reply by a specific date your agency will assume they mutually agree to have their license terminated. Foster parent signatures are not required in this instance.

3. Automatic termination due to failure to relicense (lapse)

In this instance the foster home may be in good standing with the agency, but the relicensing paperwork is not submitted to the Licensing Authority on time. This should never happen if you keep good track of when to begin the relicensing process for each family. If children are placed in the home at the time the license expires, the placement becomes illegal. (*For more on this see "Frequently Asked Questions" in this section. See Chapter 4 for an example of how to track the relicensing process for your families.*) As you get to know your families, you can adjust timelines based on how responsive or difficult to reach a particular family might be.

There is one circumstance where allowing a license to lapse is appropriate. The Supervising Agency and foster parents, for reasons outlined in item one above, may mutually agree to allow the license to lapse by not submitting a relicensure packet. Though a termination packet is not needed in this circumstance because the license will automatically terminate, it is good to submit a letter to the Licensing Authority so the reason for termination can be on file for future reference.

If a license terminates or lapses due to failure to relicense the home can be re-licensed if the paperwork is submitted to the Licensing Authority **within a year** of when the license terminated. The renewed license period will be from the date the relicensure packet is complete and the licensure period will be 24 months. For example, if a family's original license period is from January 2005 through

January 2007 but the Supervising Agency fails to submit a completed relicensure packet by January 2007, the license automatically terminates. If a complete relicensure packet is submitted in May 2007, the family's new license period would be from May 2007 thorough May 2009.



If the license has been terminated for more than a year, a new application must be submitted.

If the license has been terminated for more than a year, a new application must be submitted. If the foster parents have not been licensed for two years, they will also have to demonstrate continued mastery of the 12 parenting skills to the Supervising Agency, or they need to retake the 30-hour pre-service training. Therapeutic foster parents also have to demonstrate continued mastery of the six therapeutic skills to the Supervising Agency, or retake 10 additional hours of specific behavioral mental health training. (See the section on the Mutual Home Assessment in Part 3 for ideas about how families might demonstrate parenting skills.)

4. Allowing a license to lapse due to the reluctance of a Supervising Agency to use a foster home

In some instances an agency may choose not to place children in the home of a foster family due to concerns regarding the family's abilities to provide foster care for children. Foster families do not have a right to have children placed in their home. Child placement is a privilege, something that is done at the discretion of the Supervising Agencies. Best practice is to make placement decisions based on what the Supervising Agencies understand to be in the children's best interests.



If agencies shirk their responsibility to follow up on legitimate concerns, unsuitable families may move on to become licensed with another agency, thereby putting children at risk.

However, simply allowing foster home licenses to lapse due to unaddressed or unresolved identified needs of the foster parent is neither ethical nor good practice. It is not fair to foster parents, who have devoted their time and resources in the hopes of caring for a child, only to be continually passed over without explanation. The "lapsing" path to termination can also be dangerous to children—if agencies shirk their responsibility to follow up on legitimate concerns, unsuitable families may move on to become licensed with another agency, thereby putting children at risk.

In the following sections, the importance of an honest and ethical relationship with foster parents is discussed in detail. If you have concerns about a foster family, you should discuss them with the family in an open, respectful way. If you

need help, speak with your supervisor and colleagues. These are some of the most difficult conversations to have with families, but they are also crucial to maintaining safe foster placements for children. There may be times when additional training or support can address your concerns. If not, families deserve to know that your concerns are preventing you from placing a child in their home. In some cases, the family may transfer their license and go on to have a productive relationship with another agency. In other cases, the family may be unsuitable as foster parents. Again, confer with your supervisor on what remediation may be available, and try to keep lines of communication open.

Revocation

When a foster home license is revoked, it is unilaterally rescinded by the Licensing Authority for serious infractions of the rules that may endanger children. Supervising Agencies do not have the authority to revoke a foster care license; rather, when warranted they should submit a request to the Licensing Authority to revoke a license.



Supervising Agencies do not have the authority to revoke a foster care license.

The three most common reasons for revocation are (1) the foster parent is found by child protective services to have abused or neglected a child and the appeals process has been resolved, (2) the foster parent has used corporal punishment (i.e., struck a foster child), and (3) the foster home is not in compliance with licensing standards, and the nature of the non-compliance and child's circumstances are concerning enough to warrant immediate administrative action.

Revocation is often a contentious and drawn-out legal procedure. It is important to work collaboratively within your agency and with the Licensing Authority to determine when revocation is necessary. Even though it can be difficult, **revocation is safer for children** than merely allowing a foster home license to expire or opting not to place children in the home.

Supervising Agencies should use the DSS-5279 when they wish to recommend that the Licensing Authority revoke a foster family's license. Decisions to revoke are made by the Division's foster care licensing consultants, the section chief, foster care licensing manager, and child welfare attorney. To ensure these individuals have the information they need to make the decision, Supervising Agencies must provide specific, detailed information to the Licensing Authority when requesting revocation.

If the Licensing Authority approves your revocation request, you must explain to the foster parents why their license has been revoked and ask them to return their revoked license to you so you can return it to the Licensing Authority. Your explanation of the reason for the revocation must be clear and factual, since it is possible that it will be subject to the scrutiny of an appeals judge (see below).

Appeals

When a foster home license is denied or revoked, foster parents have the right to appeal to the Administrative Office of the Courts. Appeal procedures are specified in 10A NCAC 70L.0301. If the Licensing Authority's action is reversed on appeal, the license is approved back to the date of the denied application or the date of revocation if all qualifications are met.

When appeals occur, licensing professionals are usually asked to appear in court as primary witnesses. Appeals of revocations and denials are fairly common—most experienced licensing professionals have been called to testify in court more than once. The fact that you may be asked to stand by your records in court underscores the importance of comprehensive and consistent documentation.



The fact that you may be asked to stand by your records in court underscores the importance of comprehensive and consistent documentation.

Termination/Revocation in the Context of an Investigative Assessment

It is not uncommon for a foster family under investigation for alleged abuse or neglect of foster children to approach the Supervising Agency with a request that their license be terminated because they mistakenly believe this will end their involvement with CPS. However, by law, the investigative assessment must be thoroughly completed once the report is accepted.

If there is a finding of abuse or neglect, the Supervising Agency must explore with the foster parents whether termination, revocation, or continued licensure are appropriate.

If a Supervising Agency wishes to request a revocation it must provide the Licensing Authority with specific information about incidents or circumstances that have led to the request. If a foster parent violates rules, is substantiated for abuse or neglect, or is convicted of a crime it may be appropriate for the Supervising Agency to request revocation. It is important that these incidents are carefully staffed within your agency and recommendations are made to the Licensing Authority accordingly. Please remember that county departments of social services can share case decisions and other child protective services information with the Licensing Authority. Revocation requests are staffed with NC Division of Social Services management staff and child welfare attorneys.

The Supervising Agency can make a request for revocation. The Licensing Authority makes the final decision about the family's licensing status.

The Perfect Termination/Revocation Package

A description of the “perfect” termination packet can be found in the box below. Although samples of these forms have been provided in earlier chapters, for your convenience we have included in this chapter a sample of the DSS-5157 for termination. Please note that for terminations, signatures of the agency social worker and at least one foster parent are required. In the event that a foster parent is not available to sign, please indicate the reasons per the instructions for Part II of the form.

In the instance that you have two foster parents on a license and one foster parent wishes to terminate their foster parent status due to leaving the home, the departing parent’s signature is required on the DSS-5157. In the event that this foster parent is not available to sign, a reason must be documented as indicated on the DSS-5157.

The Perfect Termination/Revocation Package

- Cover letter, including the reason for termination or, for revocation, the regulation or policy the family is not meeting.
- Foster Care Facility License Action Request (DSS-5015)
- Relicense, Change, and Termination Request Application (DSS-5157)

Things to Remember for All Forms

- Fill in all required information, date all documents, and gather required signatures.
- Please do not fax any documents without prior approval from a licensing consultant.
- Effective date.
- To ensure your request is processed expediently, always use a copy of your turnaround DSS-5015.

In this chapter you will also find a copy of the Notice of Administrative Action Letter that a family receives from the Licensing Authority when their foster care license is revoked.

1. Sample Revocation Letter



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services
Regulatory and Licensing Services**

952 Old U.S. Highway 70, Black Mountain, North Carolina 28711

Telephone: (828) 669-3388 ■ Fax: (828) 669-3365

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

Sherry B. Bradsher, Director

VIA CERTIFIED LETTER

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Type of Action: **Revocation of Family Foster Home License**

Applicant(s):

, North Carolina,

Agency:

Date:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services has determined that your home does not comply with all the rules for licensure as a family foster home and is, therefore, revoking your license to operate as a family foster home. Upon implementation of this revocation, you will be ineligible to be licensed to operate a foster home, a child day care home, or a child group home for a period of sixty (60) months.

AREA OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH RULES:

Pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 131D, Article IA, the Social Services Commission has adopted rules governing the licensure of family foster homes. The rules governing the licensure of family foster homes are found under Title 10A: Chapter 70E of the North Carolina Administrative Code. The rules with which your home does not comply include:

BASIS FOR ACTION:

EFFECTIVE DATE OF ACTION:

Unless you pursue appeal of this action in the manner and within the time limits as outlined below your license will be revoked effective sixty (60) days from the date you receive this notice. A proper appeal will suspend the revocation of your license until the appeal is resolved.

PROCEDURES FOR APPEAL:

A. Petition

You may appeal the revocation of your license as a family foster home by requesting a contested case hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. You request a hearing by filing a Petition for a Contested Case Hearing with the Office of Administrative Hearings. A petition is filed by simply mailing the original and one copy of the petition to the Office of Administrative Hearings, 6714 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-6714.

Notice of Administrative Action Letter:
, 2005

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You may obtain a **petition form** by writing to the Clerk of the Office of Administrative Hearings at the above address or by calling (919) 733-2698. If you do not use the petition form, your request for a hearing must meet the requirements of a petition as set forth in North Carolina General Statute 150B-23. Your petition must name the Department of Health and Human Services (not the county Department of Social Services) as the Respondent in the case.

B. Certificate of Service:

Your petition must include a Certificate of Service that shows you have served a copy of the petition on the Department of Health and Human Services. The **petition form** referred to above includes a Certificate of Service section. You may serve a copy on the Department of Health and Human Services by simply mailing a copy of the Certificate of Service to Ms. Satana T. Deberry, General Counsel, Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Legal Affairs, 2001 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2001. Therefore, when you mail the original and one copy of the petition and certificate of service to the Office of Administrative Hearings, you should at the same time, mail a copy of the petition to Ms. Deberry.

C. Time Limits:

To preserve your right to appeal, your Petition for a Contested Case Hearing must be actually received by the Office of Administrative Hearings with sixty (60) days of the date you receive this notice. You must allow sufficient time for the document to arrive by mail. Unless your petition and certificate of service are received by the Office of Administrative Hearings within this time limit, your right to appeal may be lost.

D. Summary:

- Obtain a petition form by writing or calling the Office of Administrative Hearings.
- Complete the petition form being sure to name the Department of Health and Human Services as the Respondent.
- Complete the Certificate of Service section of the petition form indicating that you are mailing a copy of the petition to Ms. Deberry.
- Mail the original and one copy of the petition and certificate of service to the Office of Administrative Hearings.
- Mail a copy of the petition to Ms. Deberry at the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Allow time for your petition and certificate of service to be received by the Office of Administrative Hearings within the prescribed time limit.

Sincerely,

Jo Ann Lamm, Section Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services

cc: David Gordon, Office of the Attorney General
, Director,

Frequently Asked Questions

What happens if there are children in a home but relicensing paperwork has not been received by the Licensing Authority in time?

The placement becomes illegal and the custodian of the child becomes legally liable for the child's safety and well-being. Licensing professionals and their supervisors may also be held personally liable, which means that their personal assets (e.g., house, car, savings) could be at risk. To avoid this liability, agencies usually take one of the following actions:

- Move the child to a licensed placement. Although this solution eliminates the legal vulnerability, it risks inflicting further trauma on a child, especially if the child's current placement is stable and there is a bond between the child and his or her foster parents.
- Ask a court to make this (currently) unlicensed placement the court-ordered placement for the child. Although this solution eliminates legal vulnerability, it also means that in most cases federal and state dollars cannot be used for the care of the child.

Why have we (Supervising Agency) received a turnaround DSS-5015 indicating a license has been terminated when a relicensure packet was submitted near or on the date the licensure period ended?

It takes approximately 10 work days for the Licensing Authority to process, review, approve, and enter data in the Foster Care Licensing System (FCLS). When packets are received very close to or on the date a license is due to lapse, this does not provide enough time for the relicensure packet to be processed and information to be updated in the FCLS. The FCLS automatically terminates a license if a relicensure is not entered on or before the date the licensure period ends and a DSS-5015 turnaround is automatically produced and sent to the Supervising Agency. However, in this instance, if the relicensure packet was complete, the license will be reissued without a lapse, producing a new DSS 5015 turnaround and license.

To avoid receiving these automatic notices of termination it is strongly recommended that Supervising Agencies submit relicensure packets at least 4 weeks or 1 month before the license period ends. This will allow plenty of time for processing by the Licensing Authority and for additional information to be provided if requested without a termination notice being issued.

CHAPTER 8

CRITICAL PRACTICE ISSUES

In This Chapter

- Placement Disruption
 - Responding to Placement Disruption
 - Shared Parenting: Supporting the Birth Family-Foster Family Connection
 - Abuse and Neglect Reports on Foster Homes
 - Worker Turnover
 - Preventing Child-on-Child Abuse
 - Physical Restraint Holds
 - Critical Incident Reporting
 - Medical Issues
 - Ethical Issues
-

As you can see from the list above, this chapter deals with a variety of challenging issues. While you may not be the one directly responsible in all of these situations, by understanding the dynamics and knowing what to expect you can best support, educate, and retain foster parents. We strongly urge you to read this chapter BEFORE you're facing disruption, allegations of maltreatment in a foster home, or another crisis. The information, advice from experienced workers, and practice suggestions in this chapter will help you avert disaster and develop a plan for how you will respond should things take a turn for the worse.

Placement Disruption

Placement stability is one of the primary goals for our foster care system. The last thing anyone wants is for a child who has already suffered abuse, neglect or abandonment to face the added trauma of losing a foster family. Our own intuition in this area is reinforced by research: children who experience multiple placement disruptions have significantly greater mental health and medical complications (Rubin et al. 2004). Instability can re-traumatize youth who are already vulnerable, impair

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their ability to form secure attachments, and lead to more self-destructive and dangerous behaviors (Hartnett 1999; Pecora 2005).



As a licensing professional, YOU can help minimize placement disruption.

From surveys of experienced workers, foster parents, and relevant research, here are some of the ways licensing professionals can make a difference in maintaining placements.

1. Know your families, know your families, know your families.

The better you get to know your families, the better you will be able to match them to appropriate children, and provide them with the ongoing training and support they need to persevere when things get tough.



Placement disruptions happen most frequently due to interactions between the foster parent and the child, rather than to any one characteristic of the child or parent (Teather et al. 1994).

See Chapter 3 of this guide (the Mutual Home Assessment) for specific suggestions for getting to know families, and for questions and topics to revisit over time. Often it is only as parents get to know you better that they feel comfortable sharing more details of their history and their true feelings.

Advice from an experienced worker:

"I always tried to visit with families around meal times. I would just ask them, 'Do you mind if I stop by on my way home from work?' There's no better time to see the rituals families have, and how they interact with each other."

2. Make sure foster parents are receiving training and support that addresses their needs and the needs of the children placed in their home.

No parent is perfect, just like no child is perfect. Everyone has areas for growth. The key to licensing is finding out what families need, and the best way to provide for those needs.

One training area has been identified as especially important in enhancing placement stability: the skill and ability to accept and manage oppositional and aggressive behavior (Hartnett 1999).

Some families gain insight from talking things over or reading on their own. Others benefit from hands-on, in-the-moment modeling. Others might do best in group trainings, or peer support groups. Talk with families about how they learn

best and what helps them cope with stress. Then follow up with them to be sure they've understood and integrated what they've learned and that they've benefited from their supports. Do you see changes in how they speak to the children in their home or how they react during stressful times? If what they have tried isn't working, help families come up with something that will.

3. Maintain regular contact with your foster families, rather than just coming in to “put out the fires.”



Characteristics of social workers that are associated with placement stability include the level of rapport with foster parents and the amount of energy expended on the family's behalf (Teather et al. 1994).

Obviously, assessing parenting skills and family dynamics is not something that can be thoroughly completed while parents are initially being licensed. Not only do workers not have enough time, but families need to get to know and trust you before they can share some of their questions and concerns.



It's also good practice to keep in close touch with the foster care workers responsible for the children placed in the homes of your foster parents.

State regulations require face-to-face visits between licensing professionals and caregivers at least quarterly for family foster care (unless the out-of-home family services agreement indicates otherwise); and therapeutic foster parents require at least 60 minutes of supervision by a qualified professional on a weekly basis for each therapeutic foster child placed in the foster home. However, experienced licensing professionals and foster families know that more frequent contact leads to more open communication. It also allows you to catch problems early and intervene, rather than waiting for things to explode. Talk with your supervisor about the policies of your agency, but in general, a top priority should be maintaining a connection with families.

Advice from experienced workers:

“If you're not checking in with your families, you may not hear that Johnny's been getting into trouble in school until the parents are overwhelmed and ready to give up.”

“Even checking in by phone is enough sometimes. Families just need to vent. If they know you're there to listen and thank them, they can keep going.”

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4. Get back to families within 24 hours, or let them know who to contact in your place.

Check with your supervisor on your agency's policy on returning calls and back-up coverage. Even if your agency doesn't have specific policies, you can have one for your own families. Returning phone calls to foster parents should be one of the first items on your agenda each day. And all families should have your supervisor's name and number. Foster parents say that the most frustrating thing is not hearing back from workers until long after a crisis has passed, or going days and days without having simple questions answered. This doesn't mean you need to be available 24/7, just that it's important to communicate with families and give them options.

Advice from experienced workers:

"Sometimes when families reach out to you, you have to just hold your breath that they're not going to end by saying you need to move the child! Most times, they need reassurance and want to be told they're doing a good job. Then they get right back to what needs to be done for the child."

"Even if I was going to be out for a day, I would change my voice mail to let people know when I would be available and who to call for urgent issues. When I went on vacation, I would call my new parents or the ones having a hard time, to let them know and remind them of my supervisor's number, just in case."

5. Include foster parents in meetings and planning.

The more foster families are informed and invited to contribute, the more invested and empowered they will be to make things work. Make shared parenting a reality for your foster families. Work with your supervisor and agency to address foster family safety concerns so that you can help them develop a cooperative relationship with birth families. Advocate for foster parents to be included in child and family team meetings and permanency planning meetings. Sometimes judges may not give agencies time to fully prepare families and children for changes in placement. But the more foster parents are at the table, the more prepared they'll be for what MIGHT be coming down the road, and the more they can actively engage in working for the team's desired outcome.

Advice from a foster parent:

"Most of the time, we're going to meet the birth family. It's just a matter of whether we do it in a planned way at a meeting, or we run into them at Wal-Mart."

6. Gather information to make the best possible placement match.

Gather as much information as you can about a potential foster child from different sources, so you can make the most beneficial match for both children and foster families.

Advice from an experienced worker:

"I tell placing workers, 'Let's talk about what this child might need before he's ready to go with this family.' And I tell my [licensing] workers, 'Don't do more damage. Rather than setting the child and family up to fail, think about what placement will help the child be most successful.'"

Advice from a foster parent:

Placement always seems to be emergency placement with little or no knowledge of the child. It has most often been, "Can you take this child? Make your decision now!" This is not a good matching process.

Sometimes, your gut may tell you that a foster family and foster child just won't make a good match. Placements often disrupt when a child is placed with parents who are not able or prepared to care for him or her. In reality, sometimes emergency placements have to occur. But they carry greater risks for everyone.

Placing children on an emergency basis can increase disruption and decrease foster parent commitment to the child (McMahon 2005).

7. Share information about the child and the child's history and current situation with the foster parents.

Full disclosure of the child's behaviors, reason for placement, supervision needs, etc. is essential. It is important to make foster parents aware of everything you know as well as what you do not know. Working with foster parents, develop a protocol that outlines issues that need to be discussed at placement.

Advice from an experienced worker:

"You have to be honest with foster parents about how hard their job is. You can't sugarcoat things. I tell parents, 'You need to get those good parenting feelings somewhere else, because you're probably not going to get it from this child. He's not going to be able to thank you or show you he cares, at least not in the beginning.'"

Advice from a foster parent:

"We've had some workers who don't tell us anything. They tell us it's because of confidentiality. But we're the ones who have to live with that child, and we have other kids in the house we need to think about."

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8. Know when to provide extra support.

Be aware that foster families need a higher level of support when they have a new placement or a child is removed from their home, or if they have an especially challenging child. This is also true during major disruptions in their lives, such as divorce or separation, a death in the family, loss of a job, or diagnosis of a serious illness or disability. Even if disruptions such as these do not lead foster parents to reconsider their decision to foster, licensing professionals should be sure to factor these changes into their ongoing assessment of the family's ability to meet the needs of children in care.



You CAN share important information with foster parents without breaching confidentiality. Foster parents are part of the child's team and need to be informed.

Life-changing events are traumatic for any family, and family members often go through grieving over the changes without fully realizing it. Foster families can be in an especially vulnerable state during times of transition or disruption. Children in foster care may experience change as another painful loss, one for which they may blame themselves on some level. Or, the children in the family may act out their grief, anxiety, jealousy, or anger in the wake of a family crisis. For the foster parent, the change might compound the challenges of providing foster care to other children.

Advice from an experienced worker:

"I always call my families the day after they get a new placement, just to see how things are going. If it's a new foster family or an especially high-need child, I might continue to check in a lot, just to make sure everybody settles in."

Following are some suggestions for providing extra support to families. Of course, your relationship with the family and their receptiveness will influence which forms of support are right for them.

- Call the family frequently to check in.
- Make more frequent visits, thereby establishing yourself as a real presence and support for the family.
- Make connections with appropriate collaterals to be sure the home remains stable and supportive. (Note: a *collateral* could be anyone—birth parents, coaches, teachers, etc.—who is important in the child's life.) It's crucial to maintain regular contact with foster care workers. If the foster parent agrees and signs consent, also make contact with existing supports, such as extended family, clergy, or community groups.
- Offer referrals as appropriate, such as hospice bereavement programs, counseling, single parent groups, child care, or financial resources. Find

helpful literature or web resources, appropriate to the family's educational level and needs.

- Be aware of the stages of grief that family members might experience with some changes. Help educate and process the impact of loss with the parents.

Responding to Placement Disruption



Reduce trauma to children during placement changes by teaching foster parents to anticipate child reactions and by suggesting activities that help everyone reach closure.

Sometimes, despite everyone's best efforts, placements do not work. Other times, successful placements end due to the child's permanency plan. In either case, a strong relationship between the licensing professional and the child's social worker can help make the transition easier for everyone.

When a placement does end, what can you do to ease the pain for everyone?

Here are some suggested ways to help foster parents and children achieve closure. *Of course, supervisors and other team members should always be consulted in planning with foster families for what would be most helpful for individual children.*

1. **Talk with the Children.** It's important to allow children the chance to express any feelings they may have about saying good-bye, which can include feelings of abandonment, sadness, anxiety or unworthiness. Some children might act out around this time, so you should help foster parents prepare to provide extra support as needed. It's important not to let feelings of guilt or stress lead the adults to minimize or avoid talking about negative feelings (Bostic & Shadid 1996). While ideally this process could happen before a child leaves, in reality it might be the new caregivers who give the child this opportunity.
2. **Talk with the Foster Parents.** Foster parents also need a chance to express their emotions, which may come out gradually over time. While foster parents can share feelings of sadness with the child, there may be other feelings (such as relief or fear for the child's future) that cannot be shared with the child but need a safe outlet.

Foster parents may still need support AFTER the child has left the home. You can sometimes help families process their feelings—and avoid burn-out—by asking them to reflect back on the experience after a week or two. What were their expectations when they first took the child into their home? What was it like while the child lived with them? What are their hopes for the child's future?

3. **Pictures and Letters.** Families and children can write letters or draw pictures for each other, depending on the child's age. This can be done either in preparation or after the fact, by mail. Foster parents should also consider

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spending time with the child updating his life book so that the child has something to help him reflect on his time in the home. Make sure foster parents understand how important it is for them to tell the child that he will be missed. Parents may also want to share something special that the family will remember or has learned from the child.

4. **Reinforce Strengths and Lessons Learned.** Families can also use time before a change – or the letter they send after the placement move – to reinforce and acknowledge the positive changes or successes the child has had, even if they were small steps. They can also help smooth the way for the new placement by asking the child what she’s learned during their time together and what should be shared with the new placement about what was helpful or not helpful for her.
5. **Assessing Foster Parent Supports.** When a child leaves, it is an excellent opportunity for workers to reassess with the family what informal or formal supports, information, or training might be helpful. Foster parents can use the change as a positive opportunity to make new connections, learn new skills, or simply think about how they might handle similar situations in the future.

Shared Parenting: Supporting the Birth Family-Foster Family Connection



We know that a child’s relationship with her birth family is crucially important in resolving the trauma of separation and developing a healthy identity (Tiddy 1986, cited in Teather et al. 1994). Experience also tells us that placements are more successful—and our jobs are easier—when birth families can constructively engage with our agency and with foster families.

What can licensing professionals do to help build this important connection?

- Set the tone from the first contact with a prospective foster family. Make sure they understand that the birth family connection is a valued resource for both children and foster families.
- Prepare foster families for meetings with birth families through training and ongoing support. This includes addressing any safety concerns the foster family may have, to help them invest in the relationship.
- Assure foster parents that you or a foster care social worker will be present during the first Shared Parenting meeting or contact with the birth parents. When a child enters foster care via custody of the department of social services a shared parenting meeting must take place within the first 7 days children are placed out of the home (*NCDHHS-Division of Social Services Family Support and Child Welfare Services Manual, Chapter VIII: Protective Services, Section 1400, Part III Multiple Response System*).

- Emphasize the areas of similarity between birth and foster families. Keep the focus on meeting the needs of the child together; don't emphasize the deficits of the birth family (Casey Family Foundation 2005).
- Educate foster parents and advocate for them with colleagues to ensure that **shared parenting** and **child and family team meetings** take place and are conveniently scheduled for both families.

Advice from foster parents:

Assist with shared parenting – provide structure at first, then it can be more open.

- Be sure that foster families understand the value of Life Books and actively update them with children.
- Encourage foster parents to share pictures, art work, documentation of achievements, and daily activities with the birth family
- Develop a simple one-page profile sheet for foster families to complete about themselves to give to new children and their birth families (Casey Family Foundation 2005). Ask foster parents, birth parents, and children in care about what to include.
- Develop a profile sheet or intake questions that enable children and birth families to share something about themselves with prospective foster parents. This can include strengths and talents that may not come across in a case record, but also important tips for caring for a child. For example, in Massachusetts, birth parents are asked three questions when a child is placed:
 - What are your child's favorite foods?
 - What does your child like to do before going to bed?
 - What makes your child feel better when he or she is sick?
 (Casey Family Foundation 2005)

Abuse and Neglect Reports on Foster Homes

While licensing professionals do not typically become involved in CPS cases, you have two important roles when a report is made on one of your foster homes. First, you help assess whether the child is safe during the investigative assessment. Second, you provide support to the foster parents and keep them informed about the process, in close coordination with CPS staff and law enforcement. Therefore, it's important to be aware of relevant research findings and procedures.

Unfortunately, foster parents in North Carolina are more than twice as likely as other people to be reported for child abuse or neglect. Just as with reports made against parents and other caregivers, in the majority of cases these reports are unsubstantiated (NCDSS 2002; McMahon 2002).

In fact, according to a position paper by the National Foster Parent Association in 2002, foster parents have a 1 in 8 chance of having false abuse or neglect allegations



made against them, which is much greater than the risk faced by the average parent (NFPA 2002; McMahon 2002). The stress and resentment of the investigation cause some foster parents to stop fostering.

Reasons foster parents might be falsely accused

1. Children with a history of abuse and neglect, sometimes compounded by years in foster care and frequent placement moves, may have developed poor coping skills or anti-social behavior. They may use an allegation as a way of getting out of placement or as an act of revenge.
2. Some children in foster care may have extreme difficulty trusting and may use an allegation as a way of distancing themselves from their caregivers. Or they may have the false belief that a report on the foster parent will lead to their being returned to their birth family.



Some children might use allegations as a way of distancing themselves from their caregivers.

3. Birth families might report foster parents for a variety of conscious or unconscious motivations: jealousy, resentment, as a way to justify their own past behavior, or perhaps out of a genuine misunderstanding or over-reaction as they try to ensure their child's safety in a stranger's home.
4. People in the community might not understand why people become foster parents. They might be suspicious of parents' motivations for foster parenting, and they might be more likely to misinterpret or overreact to something they see or hear.

(Source: NCDSS 2002)

Despite concerns about false reports, the reality remains that some foster parents do abuse and neglect the children in their homes. Out of the estimated 826,000 children who were maltreated in the U.S. in 1999, 1.5% (approximately 12,390 children) were maltreated by "substitute care providers," which includes foster parents, residential care providers, and child care providers (USDHHS 2002).

Reasons abuse or neglect occurs in foster homes

Many of the reasons are very relevant to licensing professionals in the screening and preparation they do with prospective foster parents.

1. The Supervising Agency might not gather enough information about the applicant during the initial assessment to rule out people with serious problems such as mental health, substance abuse, or anger issues.
2. The Supervising Agency may not gather enough information on the foster family's strengths and needs to know how to best match them with children, or

to know what ongoing support and training the foster parents need to safely maintain a placement.

3. The Supervising Agency might not have enough information about the child for the foster family to make an informed decision about whether they can meet the child's needs.
4. Once placement occurs, the foster parent may be overburdened by caring for too many challenging children.
5. Foster parents may receive too little support or training for managing the children's behaviors and relieving their own stress.
6. The stress of fostering high-need children might overwhelm the family and cause a breakdown in their usual way of functioning.
7. A foster child might have developed such maladaptive behavior or have such an intense need for a reaction that they might cause foster parents to lose their normal level of self control.

(Source: NCDSS 2002)

Of course, if at any time the licensing professional or foster care social worker suspects abuse or neglect, a report must be made to CPS.

What happens when an allegation is made

As with any other report, the county DSS that receives the report determines whether the allegations, if true, would meet the definitions of abuse, neglect, or dependency according to the state statutes, N.C.G.S. 7B-101. The intake social worker needs to distinguish between licensing issues and issues that would meet the criteria for accepting a report. Remember that screening and investigative decisions need to be made according to the state statutes, and not according to agency licensing policy. For example, a report might come in to CPS about inadequate sleeping space for each child, but if there are no maltreatment concerns this would be addressed as a licensing issue and not as a CPS report.

Similar to any report made, all children living in the foster home are considered “alleged victim children.”

Foster parents need to be informed of these policies DURING THEIR PRE-SERVICE TRAINING. Periodic in-service training on this topic is also a good idea. Often foster parents are not prepared for all the children in their home—including their own birth children—to be part of the investigation.



Foster parents should be informed during pre-service training that when CPS accepts a report on their home, the safety of ALL children in the home will be assessed, including their own biological children.

The information required in the report is the same for any report, according to G.S. 7B-301.

What happens when the report is NOT accepted

As with any unaccepted report, written notice must be sent to the reporter within five work days from the receipt of the report, unless the reporter waives this or is anonymous. The report must include how the reporter may obtain a review of the agency's decision; whether the report was referred to any state or local law enforcement agency, if appropriate; and any referrals made to other agencies, as appropriate.

There is an ADDITIONAL step that might be needed when a report against a foster family is NOT ACCEPTED. If the complaint doesn't meet statutory requirements but does involve the general quality of care or compliance with licensing standards, then the information needs to be provided to the agency or staff responsible for supervising the foster home for follow-up. Many times the agency receiving the report will also refer concerns about general quality of care in a foster home or compliance with foster home licensing standards directly to the Licensing Authority, which then works with the home's Supervising Agency regarding the concerns.

What happens when a report IS accepted

1. When accepted, reports on foster homes are always **investigative assessments**. The county DSS where the child is located must initiate the assessment. There are three different response timeframes, depending on the severity of the report: immediate, within 24 hours, and within 72 hours. The initiation includes having a face-to-face contact with all children living in the home. If this doesn't occur, there must be documentation of diligent efforts to meet the time frame and documentation that the children were seen as soon as possible.

During this initial visit, the CPS staff must assess the child's condition and the levels of immediate and continuing risk of harm, and assure the child's safety during the investigative period. This information is documented in the child's placement record.

Assessments will be made of ALL children in the home, including the foster parents' birth children.

Foster care is designed to protect children from maltreatment. Because of this, CPS cannot respond to reports of maltreatment in foster homes with family assessments—they must ALWAYS use the investigative assessment response.

2. Removal of the child takes place only when the risk of harm to the child outweighs the strengths of the child's relationship with the foster parents. If the child is removed, documentation has to provide the rationale for doing so.
3. Once the investigative assessment has been initiated, the county DSS must then decide whether it is appropriate to conduct the assessment, or whether they need to request the help of another county to conduct it. This is to avoid

any potential conflict of interest for the county DSS in meeting its responsibility for both ensuring children's safety and retaining foster families. (See Chapter V, volume 1 of the *Family Services Manual* for more information on conducting an assessment in an out-of-home placement.) The county DSS conducts the investigative assessment if:

- The foster home is licensed by a private agency within the county and not by the county DSS itself; AND
- The county DSS has no children in their custody currently residing in the home.

Conversely, if the county DSS supervises the license for the home, OR if they have children currently placed in the home, then they must refer the report to another county DSS for investigation.

Remember, even if the county DSS that is responsible for conducting the assessment knows it will need to eventually pass the case on to a another county, it is still responsible for meeting the mandatory time frame for initiating the investigative assessment.

4. The agency that *supervises the foster family* will need to document in the foster family's record the immediate assessment of risk of harm and the ability of the foster family to care for the child. The outcome of the investigative assessment will also be added to the foster family's record. There should be no identifying information about the alleged child victim in this record.
5. When a county DSS accepts a CPS report against a foster home that is supervised by another agency, the DSS must notify the other agency. This should be done with a verbal report within 2 hours, followed by a written report on the DSS-5282. This gives the two agencies the chance to discuss the procedures for the investigative assessment and to coordinate activities with the children and the foster parents.
6. An important issue to resolve right away is who will tell the foster family about the investigative assessment, and when they can be told. The agency staff responsible for *supervising the foster family*, whether a private agency worker or a DSS licensing professional, is usually the one to notify them that a complaint has been received and explain what to expect during the assessment process. It is important to do this as quickly as possible, and to remain available as a resource for information and support throughout the process. This may be a major determinant of the family's continued willingness to foster, if the report is unsubstantiated.

In some cases, however, the county DSS conducting the CPS investigative assessment or law enforcement **may require that the foster family not receive prior notice due to the nature of the report.** (For example, a report might come in that a child has expressed to a teacher that he is afraid to return to his foster home. The CPS investigator would want to interview the child and teacher to assess imminent risk to the child, before informing the

foster parents of the report.) In these situations, it is very important that the CPS staff, the Supervising Agency, and law enforcement coordinate when, how, and by whom the foster parents will be notified and updated.



Providing foster parents with support and information during an investigative assessment can have a big impact on that family's willingness to continue fostering if the report is unsubstantiated.

7. Another important issue to resolve early on is when and how to tell the birth family about the report. It is necessary to inform birth parents at least at the point when a case decision is made, unless parental rights have been terminated. However, when children in foster care have contact with their birth family, they might share the information BEFORE the case decision is made. **The birth family should not hear about the report first from the child.** If the child will have contact with the birth family during the process, the agency *responsible for the child's placement* should consider talking with them.
8. The CPS staff conducting the investigative assessment needs to maintain close contact with the Supervising Agency to share information about progress and case decision. This is essential not only to ensure the safety of the children currently in the home, but to help determine whether the foster home can be used in the future.
9. Sometimes foster parents ask that children be removed from their home and their license withdrawn, because they mistakenly believe this will end their involvement with CPS. But by law, the investigative assessment must be thorough and must be completed once the report is accepted.
10. Within five work days of the receipt of the accepted report, the county DSS that initially received it needs to give written notice to the reporter. This notice, unless the reporter is anonymous or asks not to receive it, needs to state whether the report was referred for investigative assessment and whether it was referred to state or local law enforcement agency.
11. The county DSS conducting the investigative assessment also sends a written report to the Licensing Authority (DSS-5282) (NC Division of Social Services, Regulatory and Licensing Services, 952 Old US 70 Highway, Black Mountain, NC 28711) once the investigative assessment is completed. If the investigative assessment is done by a reciprocal county, the report also goes to the director of the agency that supervises the foster home, and to the director of the agency that has legal custody of the child, if these agencies are different. This report needs to contain the following information:
 - Name of the foster parents as listed on the license
 - The foster parents' license identification number
 - Nature of the complaint

- Case decision and date it was made
- If substantiated, type of abuse/neglect/dependency and name of perpetrator
- Recommendations, if appropriate, regarding the continued use of the foster home even if no abuse, neglect, or dependency was found

Please note: the name of the reporter should NOT be in this report.

This report must be submitted quickly, since administrative action often depends on the findings. A copy of the report should be sent to the district attorney if that office is involved.

12. In addition, the DSS that *conducts* the investigative assessment needs to notify the alleged perpetrator **and** the birth parents of the case decision.
13. If the assessment concludes that serious child maltreatment has taken place, the DSS in the foster parents' county of residence must submit a completed DSS-5104 (Report to the Central Registry). If the alleged perpetrator is determined to be responsible for abuse or serious neglect then they will also be reported to the Responsible Individuals List.
14. The DSS that *conducts the* investigative assessment documents actions taken and their decision-making process in the case record and files all required reports. Their CPS record or section for the child should contain the following:
 - A copy of the completed DSS-5104 (Central Registry form)
 - Case dictation
 - A copy of the written report (DSS-5268) submitted to the Licensing Authority
 - A copy of written reports submitted to the district attorney and law enforcement if there is evidence of abuse (see below)
 - A copy of written notices given to birth parents, custodians, and alleged perpetrator, or documentation that verbal notices were given
16. None of the CPS investigative material should be in the case record for the foster family.

Are investigative assessments of foster homes different?

For the most part, the steps of the investigative assessment are the same, and are done according to the same administrative guidelines. But there are some special considerations and steps to take for investigative assessments of foster homes.

The county DSS *investigating the report* needs to:

1. Obtain information from the records of the agency that has custody of the child. Find out if there have been any previous reports of abuse or neglect of the child. If a reciprocal county is conducting the investigative assessment, the DSS that has *custody of the child* should automatically provide this information. The child's foster care worker is also a valuable source of information about the child's history, behavior, and needs.

2. Check with the agency that supervises the foster family. Find out if there have been previous reports against the family, including any that were unsubstantiated. The Supervising Agency also should have information about family dynamics, history, and circumstances that could be relevant.
3. Consider birth families an important collateral source of information. When children have ongoing visitation with their parents, they may have shared information. Or, the parents may have observed dynamics or changes in behavior that could be relevant. The investigative agency should consult with the agency responsible for the child's placement to determine how reliable the birth family might be. The two agencies can also work together to decide who should interview the birth family.
4. Discuss the allegations with the foster parent, along with a detailed explanation of the steps that will take place during the investigative assessment. Best practice is for this conversation to be face-to-face, and to include the DSS *investigating the report* and the agency that *supervises the foster family*.
5. Discuss the findings with the foster family. Again, best practice is for this conversation to be face-to-face, and to include the DSS *investigating the report* and the agency that *supervises the foster family*.

Role of Licensing Professionals during Investigative assessments

In general, your job is to support foster parents during this difficult time. However, licensing professionals are often some of the first agency representatives sent into a foster home after a report is made, with the mission of doing a quick assessment of safety in the home in case immediate removal is necessary before the full-fledged investigative assessment begins. In DSS policy this is called a "pre-inspection safety visit." Balancing your roles as supporter of the family and representative of the agency during this visit can be especially difficult; licensing professionals must watch what they say to the family about what is going on. The safety of the children must be their first concern, but they should also not move the children to another placement unless absolutely necessary.

Advice from a foster parent:

Licensing professionals should remember they are the advocates for the foster parents. When there are issues with the department the licensing worker should be helping the foster parents, not presenting charges.

When the finding is ABUSE or NEGLECT

1. The county DSS that *performs the investigative assessment* needs to immediately notify the county DSS where the child is located, if it is a different county.

2. If there is a finding of abuse or neglect, the foster parents' Supervising Agency must explore with the foster parents whether termination, revocation, or continued licensure are appropriate.
3. When the finding is abuse, the agency that supervises the foster home must immediately notify the district attorney's office or the appropriate law enforcement agency. A written report needs to follow within 48 hours. This report needs to include the following:
 - The name, age, and address of the foster child, the foster parents, and the alleged perpetrator (if different from the foster parents).
 - A description of the abuse or neglect that may have occurred.
 - If abuse has been substantiated, whether the alleged abuse was physical, emotional, or sexual.
 - The date the report was received and when evidence that abuse may have occurred was found.
 - The plan developed by DSS to protect the child and what is being done to carry out the plan.
 - Please note: DSS may share the name, address and telephone number of the reporter with the district attorney or law enforcement.
 - After receiving the information local law enforcement must immediately (within 48 hours) initiate and coordinate a criminal investigation, while DSS conducts the assessment.

Ways Agencies Can Help Foster Families Around Alleged Maltreatment

Some North Carolina foster families who have been investigated for child abuse report feeling uninformed, abandoned, and betrayed by child welfare agencies. As a result of this experience, some foster parents choose to stop fostering altogether. Even those who remain involved with DSS may feel hostility and distrust towards the agency. Although county DSS agencies must comply with state law, rule, and policy, there are things they can do to educate, prepare, and support foster parents investigated by CPS. These steps, adapted from a presentation by the NC Division of Social Services' Donna Foster, Sherry Dillard, and Sara West, include:

Ensure Your Agency Understands and Correctly Applies State Policy. See the NCDSS Family Support and Child Welfare Services Manual, Chapter VIII: Protective Services Section 1416 "Investigative Assessment in Out-of-Home Living Arrangements." Whenever possible, maintain regular contact with foster parents being investigated by CPS: Provide reassurance to the foster parents throughout the period of time it takes to conduct an assessment of child abuse and neglect by making regular contacts with the foster parents, offering explanations and clarifications for delays and other activities.

Regularly review agency practice, policy, and procedures with all foster parents, placing special emphasis on any changes. Clearly communicate about the agency's expectations of foster parents and the rules the agency itself must follow. Offer to support foster parents as they work to meet agency expectations.

Offer workshops to enhance foster parents' skills. Ongoing in-service courses on a wide range of practical topics, such as the use of positive discipline, communication techniques, and understanding the child welfare system, will improve parents' ability to cope with the challenges of fostering.

Be clear and honest about the CPS implications for foster parents. All foster parents should understand the following from the beginning of their relationship with the agency: child abuse reporting laws, investigative procedures, agency and state policies regarding reports of child maltreatment in foster homes, foster parents' legal and procedural rights, and what legal assistance (if any) is available to foster parents undergoing investigative assessment.

Provide continual communication. Agency staff should provide support and communication with the foster family before, during, and after a CPS investigation. It may also be useful to cultivate a trained "allegation support" foster parent or other person to offer support to families, even if it is only listening.

Work with foster parents and foster parent associations. Foster parent associations that know how to provide objective support to foster parents under assessment—who can listen to them, comfort them, and inform them of their rights without taking sides—are perhaps the best way to ensure that families continue fostering after an unsubstantiation.

Adapted from *Fostering Perspectives*, vol. 7, No. 1. <ssw.unc.edu/fcrp/fp/fp_vol7no1/implications.htm>

Worker Turnover



The more attached the family or child is to the worker, the longer they will need to prepare emotionally. Try to have at least one final visit with each family to say goodbye.

While it is inevitable, the loss of a trusted worker may be unexpectedly painful or confusing for children who have already experienced so much loss in their lives. Without even realizing it, workers may sometimes provide the steady, supportive presence for children in foster care that is so important in developing resiliency (Thomlinson 1997).

There also may be implications on the retention and quality of foster parents who experience multiple changes in workers. Families often rely on their workers for the support and information they need to continue doing such a difficult job (Fisher 2000). Making the transition to a new worker as smooth and positive as possible allows the connection with the Supervising Agency to continue, which can be critical to retaining good foster families (Fisher 2000) and maintaining placements (Teather et al. 1994). On the other hand, if families or children experience multiple staff changes without appropriate acknowledgement and discussion, it can damage their future relationships with workers and jeopardize placements (Ward 1984; Teather et al. 1994).

Before leaving, licensing professionals should take the opportunity to do important termination work with children and foster parents.

If a child's foster care worker is leaving, licensing workers can help facilitate a healthy termination. This can be some of the most important and meaningful work you will do with families (Ward 1984). A positive ending to the relationship can be the chance to recognize and reinforce all that has gone before (McGee 1972). Planning the exit allows you to minimize the negative emotional impact and instead provide a positive model for saying goodbye. Children in foster care may thus avoid some of the self-blame, shame, and confusion of prior losses, and foster parents can be supported to remain as a secure and nurturing placement. The stronger the worker and the worker's connection with the family, the more critical it is that this type of work be done.



Ways to End Your Work with Families

1. Mark on your calendar when you leave and, as appropriate with each family, make sure you speak with each parent and child to let them know. The more attached the family or child is to the worker, the longer they will need to prepare emotionally (Bostic & Shadid 1996). You should then try to have at least one final visit with each family to say goodbye.



2. You don't need to give a lot of details on why you're leaving or where you're going, but you do want to emphasize it as a positive change and use the time as an opportunity to talk about the work you've done together.
3. At the same time, it's important to allow families to express any feelings they may have about the good-bye, which can include feelings of abandonment, sadness, anxiety, or unworthiness. Some children might act out around this time, so foster parents should be informed and prepared to provide extra support as needed. It's important not to let your own feelings of guilt or stress at leaving lead you to minimize or avoid talking about such negative reactions (Bostic & Shadid 1996).
4. Smooth the way for the new worker. Help the family see this as a chance for them to meet someone new and have another support person in their lives. Ideally, you can share the name and something positive—and accurate—about the new worker. ("She's very dedicated and really cares about the families she works with.") You can also ask what the new worker can do differently from you to make things better, and what you can do to make it easier for everyone.
5. Emphasize that you will be sure to pass on anything important about the family or the progress of their case. You can even ask the family specifically what it's important for the new worker to know. Be sure to then pass on that information verbally or in your last notes! Transfer of cases to new workers often is a major contributor to failure to meet mandated time-frames and provide appropriate follow-up to families (GAO 03-611T).
6. When possible, offer to introduce the new worker to the family in person or, at the very least in a conference call. In-person introductions can also be done at a group meeting or training. Again, your degree of closeness to each family should determine how this is done and how long the process lasts. The important thing is to make the family and child feel they're informed and they have some choice in how the change-over takes place.
7. Depending on the type of relationship and age of the children, you can write letters or draw pictures for each other. You should also write at least a short letter to each family. In the letters you can thank the parents or child for the opportunity to get to know them, wish them well in the future, and note something special about them that you will remember or that touched you as a special gift.
8. As one worker leaves and a new one takes over, it is also an excellent opportunity for workers to reassess with the child, family, and co-workers what informal or formal supports might be helpful. Remember that at different times in their lives, children who have lived through trauma may need to enter or re-enter treatment. Experiencing another loss may bring up painful issues or troubling behavior for the child. For foster parents and children, presenting change as a positive opportunity rather than another

stress can make for stronger placements and empower families to make new connections.

Preventing Child-on-Child Abuse



A detailed safety plan should be provided for every new foster care placement, since we often don't know whether children have been sexually abused.

Although licensing professionals are often not the ones to develop safety plans to prevent child-on-child abuse, they are responsible for training foster parents and preparing them to meet the specific needs of the children in their care.

Parents often have a hard time managing sexual development and aggressive behavior in their children. When parenting children who have been victimized and possibly sexualized at a premature age by abuse, foster parents face even more difficulties (Ingham & Van Zessen 1998). For the children, acting out sexually or physically puts them at increased risk of losing their placements.

One study found that, out of 40 children in placement with a history of sexual abuse, two-thirds of them (27 children) were showing concerning sexual behaviors. Concerns covered a broad spectrum of behaviors, including compulsive public masturbation, overt sexual behavior, sexually abusing behavior, sexual activity with peers, prostitution, and other exploitation. It is important to note that one-third of the children did not show any concerning sexual behaviors (Farmer & Pollock 2003). In a variety of ways, children may inadvertently re-create the lifestyle or chaos from which they came, and licensing professionals can help foster parents prepare for this.

Prevention Steps

1. **First and foremost, foster parents need to have as much detailed information as possible about children's backgrounds.** Knowing the kinds of trauma a child has experienced can help prepare foster parents to meet the emotional needs of the child and understand some of the dynamics of the birth family. Knowing about the kinds of symptoms children have shown previously helps prepare them to prevent and manage acting out (Farmer & Pollock 2003). Foster parents and workers can then collaborate on protecting not only the victimized child, but also other children in the home.
2. **Close supervision and a detailed safety plan should be provided for every new foster care placement, since we often don't know whether children have been sexually abused.** The goal is to establish an open and safe environment for children who may have lived with a secretive atmosphere and confusing boundaries. Specific ground rules should be set together for safe and appropriate contact and behavior in the home (Farmer & Pollock 2003). Instead of being punitive, this process should actively convey the message

that the child is cared for and that every effort is going to be made to help everyone feel safe. Part of feeling safe is bringing into the open appropriate boundaries for such things as use of the bedrooms and bathroom, acceptable ways to show affection, and limits on “playful” contact such as roughhousing and tickling. *For guidelines from Appalachian Family Innovations on developing a Family Sexual Safety Plan, see item “N” in the Appendix.*

3. **Another important area to consider is contact with birth family members.** Visits may provoke anxiety that may lead to increased sexual or aggressive behavior (Friedrich 1993). In addition, in some instances family members could place the child at risk for further abuse either directly or by exposing them to unsafe people or situations (Farmer & Pollock 2003). Obviously such additional trauma could exacerbate any symptoms and cause further emotional damage. Contact with siblings who were also abused needs especially close supervision. Again, children who are acting out may have experienced confusing sexual boundaries and/or an acceptance of violent behavior in their birth families. In the highly emotional and possibly stressful atmosphere of a sibling visit, these factors could surface.
4. **The best way to manage acting out from trauma is to prevent it altogether.** Educate your foster parents and colleagues that children with a history of sexual abuse need treatment with specially-trained therapists, to reduce their risk for negative short and long term effects. One study found that only 50% of child sexual abuse victims were referred for treatment, and only 25% actually received it. Another showed that, of those who actually went to treatment, most went for only one to two visits. Certainly not all victims will suffer trauma, and in fact 10-28% of sexual abuse victims report no immediate distress. So it is important to remain optimistic and not assume poor outcomes for children who have been abused. At the same time, even children who initially are without symptoms may suffer effects later on, especially during puberty (Frothingham 2000, cited in Flick & Caye 2001). Foster parents and workers should remain sensitive to the fact that treatment may be necessary at different times for different children, especially when they are exhibiting new or concerning symptoms or behaviors.



Responding to Possible Child-on-Child Abuse

1. Immediately inform your supervisor and CPS in the foster family's county.
2. CPS will determine, based on input from you, the foster family, and any other collaterals they deem appropriate, whether there is a need to investigate or contact law enforcement.
3. In coordination with CPS, your supervisor, and the foster family, determine whether the alleged child abuser needs to have a new placement, or whether he or she can remain in the home.
4. A detailed, written safety plan should be developed and signed by the child and everyone on the team, no matter what the placement decision. As noted

above, the emphasis should be on keeping everyone safe, including the child alleged to be the abuser, rather than on punishment. This is especially true since often times all of the facts are not yet known. The plan should include, at least initially, no unsupervised time with other children or teens. *For guidelines from Appalachian Family Innovations on developing a detailed safety plan for children who have acted out sexually, see item "N" in the Appendix.*

5. Help foster parents and other team members understand that children who victimize other children have most likely been victims themselves. They need treatment by mental health providers with specialized training for young offenders, to help them deal with their own histories and reduce the risk of re-offending in the future (Freeman-Longo & Blanchard 1998).

Ways Foster Parents Can Help Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused

1. Be friendly but clear with your household rules. Develop a plan that spells out how to live in your home. Don't assume children know these things. Write it down and give a copy to your social worker so he or she is aware of how your family functions. This can be helpful if anyone questions your life-style.

Note: Rules are developed only when there is a need. For example, masturbation is a reaction to being sexually stimulated (abused). Babies touch themselves as infants. It is a natural action. It can become an excessive need for a child who has been sexually stimulated over a long time period. It can show up when the child is insecure, deep in thought, or needing to be stroked (much like a child who gently pulls on their hair or sucks their thumb). Many times, the child isn't aware of what he or she is doing. Instead of yelling or shaming the child, establish guidelines for children if they find they need to "touch themselves."

Suggested Guidelines: Must be alone with door shut and shades closed, don't cause pain or bleeding, no objects can be used, time alone is limited to 15 minutes. Add the guidelines you feel are important. Then give children opportunity to develop self-esteem and other interests. Their need to masturbate will lessen.

2. Listen to the child when he or she is disclosing; don't tell the child how to feel or what to say. Children don't always need advice, but they do need to vent. Let them use their own words, even if they are offensive to you. You can help them replace their offensive words with more acceptable ones later when they aren't opening their souls up to you. Trust can be built here. Do not promise not to tell anyone what is shared. Rather, say, "I won't share the information unless I feel there is someone who can help. I will tell you who I feel we need to share this information with."

3. Don't talk badly about the child's birth family. A child's family is part of her identity; these connections are vital to the outcome of the child's life. If she is currently separated from the non-offender and her siblings, she may feel isolated and afraid. Helping the child to visit her family will help build the child's trust in you. You aren't judge and jury of the child's birth family—others on the treatment team are responsible for this. If you take this position you may not be in place to help.

4. Record any information, such as birth parents' behavior with child, signals of sexual abuse of the child, and disclosures from the child or family. Report these to the child's social worker immediately. Report your reactions to what you observed. Keep a copy of everything you submit.

5. Let the child talk about his feelings about his family, including the offender. "Regardless of how we feel about them, incest perpetrators are still very important to the families they have betrayed. In psychological terms they are still 'central attachments' for the family" (McMahon, 2000). You might want to tell the child, "There are different ways parents can show children 'love' and that is what the social workers and doctors are trying to teach your parents."

6. Teach the child some of the other ways parents can show children caring and love. This is another reason why foster and adoptive parents have to be friendly and clear with boundaries so the child can learn. Remember, repeating the rules and expectations will be necessary until the child can create new positive habits. This is an opportunity to work on enhancing the child's self esteem by spending quality time with her. Have fun, laugh, and play. This may be the first time the child has freely experienced this type of interaction.

7. Create a "life book" with the child so she can put her life into perspective. With stories and pictures, the child can look at her past, present, and future. It will help alleviate her confusion and leave her with time to laugh and play. Social workers and therapists can use the life book as a therapeutic tool in counseling the child.

8. Spend time with the child and teach the child how to laugh and play. Give them power in their lives and help them to understand that they are not at fault. This could be life changing for a sexually abused child.

Physical Restraint Holds

Physical restraint holds should only be used in the most extreme circumstances—only if the child is an immediate threat to herself or others and all other attempts to address the situation have failed.



Only individuals who have been trained by an approved, certified trainer in the use of physical restraint holds may physically restrain children in foster care.

You should be familiar with your own agency's policy about restraint holds—for insurance/liability reasons, many Supervising Agencies do not allow foster parents to use restraint holds of any kind.

Both family foster care and therapeutic foster care parents can use physical restraint holds if they have received the required training from a certified trainer and the executive director (or designee) of the Supervising Agency has provided a letter to the foster parent stating that he or she has permission to administer physical restraint holds and specifying the particular physical restraint holds they are allowed to administer. A copy of this letter must be in the foster parent's licensing file.

The goal of the mutual assessment process is to ensure that foster parents have the skills, training, and support to keep children safe and support their development. Foster parents need to be prepared to manage challenging behavior by understanding some of the dynamics and developmental issues that cause it and by knowing behavior management techniques to safely contain it. In the vast majority of cases, foster parents can successfully use their skills to de-escalate tense situations and avoid violent behavior. But what about those rare cases when a child is doing something that puts himself – or someone else – in immediate danger? When can a foster parent physically restrain a foster child?

There are two primary rules that determine when physical restraint holds can be used for children in foster care in North Carolina.

1. They can be used ONLY “to physically hold a child who is at imminent risk of harm to himself or others UNTIL the child is calm” (emphasis added; 10A NCAC 70E.1103(a)(4)).
2. They can be used ONLY by foster parents who:
 - Have been trained by an approved, certified trainer in the use of physical restraint holds (10A NCAC 70E.1103(d)), and
 - Have received written approval from the executive director of their Supervising Agency (10A NCAC 70E.1103(f)).



Only holds approved by the Licensing Authority can be used.

There are many more specific rules on what foster parents can and cannot do in terms of restraining children in their care. Before going into those details, it's important to look at the context in which these rules were developed.

In October 1998, the *Hartford Courant* ran a five-part investigative series entitled “Deadly Restraint.” They found that there had been 142 deaths related to restraints in the U.S. over a 10-year period. Thirty-three percent of those were caused by asphyxia (Weiss 1998).



This series brought wide-spread attention to the topic of restraint methods, and reports of abuse, injury, and death from these methods began appearing (NAMI 1999). In 2002, the Child Welfare League of America estimated that 8-10 children die each year due to restraints, while many others suffer from injuries such as bites, damaged joints, broken bones, and friction burns (CWLA 2002). In addition, some researchers feel that, even in the most correct of circumstances, physical restraints create a sense of helplessness and loss of control in the person being restrained. This can potentially lead the person to react aggressively, in an attempt to re-assert his own identity and perceptions (Stilling 1992; Hopton 1995). Alternative anger management techniques are widely considered to be more therapeutic, effective, and respectful of a person's autonomy (Lewis 2002).

While physical restraints should clearly be avoided whenever possible, what does it mean when you do have to restrain a child? In this context, “restraint” refers to “any physical method of restricting an individual's movement, physical activity, or normal access to his or her body” (ISPMHN 1999). Restraint does not include the redirection of a child by physical contact, such as calmly placing a hand on the shoulder or back of a child to gently encourage their activity and attention elsewhere. There are three different types of restraints (Ryan & Peterson).

1. **Mechanical restraints** refers to the use of any device (tape, tie downs, belts, etc.) used to limit someone's movement. Mechanical restraints MAY NOT be used on children in foster care under any circumstances (10A NCAC 70E 0401 d1).
2. **Chemical restraint** refers to the use of medication to control someone's behavior or restrict movement. A foster parent may use a drug as a restraint ONLY if it is required to treat a medical condition. A chemical restraint cannot ever be used for punishment, convenience, or as a substitute for adequate supervision (10A NCAC 70E .0401 e).
3. **Ambulatory restraints** refers to the use of one or more people using their bodies to restrict someone's movement. Trained foster parents may use this type of restraint only under very specific circumstances, which take into account the seriousness and potential danger of the method.

Before employing a physical restraint hold, foster parents who are trained and pre-approved must also be sure they've met these criteria:

- The child does not have a medical condition, nor is the child taking any medications, that could impact his behavior or his response to a restraint
- The foster parents have tried every possible, less restrictive approach to de-escalate the situation
- The foster parent has identified the least restrictive way to hold the child to keep him from harm
- There is a second trained foster parent or trained adult present (Rule 10A NCAC 70E .1103(e)(6) does provide an opportunity for a waiver of the second person in attendance).



There must be a second trained foster parent or trained adult present.

Physical restraint holds should:

- Never be used for discipline or convenience
- Should be administered in the **least restrictive manner possible**
- Never involve another child in helping to restrain or in any other way
- **End as soon as the child becomes calm**

During the time the child is being restrained or held, and for at least 15 minutes after, the foster parent must:

- Monitor the child's breathing
- Be sure that the child is verbally responsive and in control of motor functions
- Be sure that the child remains conscious without any complaints or pain

If at any time the child complains of being unable to breathe or loses motor control, the foster parent must end the restraint immediately, or adjust the position to be sure the child's breathing and motor control are not restricted.

If at any time the child appears to be in distress, the foster parent must immediately seek medical attention for the child.

Following the use of a physical restraint hold, the foster parent should have a conversation with the child about the incident. They should discuss what led up to it or may have "triggered" the incident; how the child feels about the incident, both physically and emotionally; what if any steps should be taken right away to resolve the conflict or situation; and what might be done differently next time the situation arises.

The foster parent also needs to let the Supervising Agency know. A worker will need to interview the foster parent and document the event in an incident report provided by the Licensing Authority. The report needs to include:

- The child's name, age, height, and weight

- The type of hold used
- How long the hold lasted
- The trained foster parent who administered the hold
- The trained foster parent or adult who witnessed the hold
- Less restrictive approaches that were attempted before using the hold
- The child's behavior that necessitated the use of the hold
- Whether the child needed medical attention.

Any time a physical restraint hold is used, the foster care worker should problem-solve with the family about what's working and not working for behavior and anger management. Remembering again the overall goal of a safe and supportive environment for the child, the focus should always be on eliminating the need for physical restraint holds and building positive coping skills.

There are also procedural steps that must be taken when physical restraint holds are used. Child-placing agencies that permit their foster parents to use physical restraint holds must submit to the Licensing Authority a "Monthly Physical Restraint Report." These reports should be submitted the seventh day of the month following the month of the report. (For example, if a restraint is used in July, the report for the month of July must be submitted to the Licensing Authority in Black Mountain by August 7.) A blank version of the Monthly Physical Restraint Report for Child-Placing Agencies can be found on the following page.

**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
MONTHLY PHYSICAL RESTRAINT REPORT**

CHILD PLACING AGENCY
(Restrains Administered by Foster Parents)

Report for the Month of: _____
(Give Month and Year)

Name of Agency: _____ Address of Agency: _____

Total Number of Restraints Used this Month: _____

Total Number of Clients Restrained: _____

Total Number of Physical Injuries Resulting from Restraints: _____

Summary of Kinds of Injuries: _____

Children Restrained	Number of Restraints	Date(s) of Restraints
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Comments:

Submitted By: _____
(Give Name and Position)

Date: _____

Critical Incident Reporting

Critical incident reporting does not fall under the official responsibility of licensing professionals. However, licensing workers should be familiar with the information contained in this section for two reasons: (1) so that you can ensure your agency responds in an appropriate and timely way when critical incidents occur and (2) so that you are prepared if your executive director asks you to take the lead for the agency in responding to and reporting critical incidents.

A “critical incident” is said to have occurred when a child in foster care:

- Dies
- Attempts suicide
- Is hospitalized
- Runs away for more than 24 hours
- Is arrested
- Is suspected of having been abused or neglected by staff, subcontractors, volunteers, interns, or foster parents in a foster home supervised by the agency

Supervising Agencies must have written policies and procedures for responding to these critical incidents and for reporting critical incidents to the Licensing Authority.

When a critical incident occurs, the Supervising Agency’s executive director (or his or her designee) must submit a “Critical Incident Reporting Form” to the Licensing Authority **within 72 hours**. An example of this form can be found on the following page. Supervising Agencies have to maintain their critical incident reports according to their own risk management policies, and they must make them available to the Licensing Authority upon request.

In addition, if a child placed in foster care dies, the Supervising Agency’s executive director (or his or her designee) must immediately notify the child’s parents, guardians, or legal custodians and the Licensing Authority.

1. DSS-5281 Critical Incident Reporting Form

CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services

Attention: This form must be completed and submitted to the Division of Social Services, Regulatory and Licensing Services, via email to Cindy.Norton@ncmail.net and to your agency consultant, within 72 hours of the incident. This form should be password protected before being emailed. For any questions or comments regarding this form please contact Cindy Norton at the email address above or at 828-669-3388 x222.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Agency Name: _____ Address: _____
 Name and address of group home/cottage: _____
 Name(s) and address of foster parent(s): _____
 Facility ID Number of group home/foster home: _____
 Client name: _____ Age: _____ Date client placed with agency: _____
 Parent/Guardian or Legal Custodian: _____
 Date/Time Parent/Guardian or Legal Custodian notified: _____
 Date of incident: _____ First person to learn of incident: _____
 Was the client treated by a physician for the incident: ☐ Yes ☐ No
 If yes, what was the date of treatment: _____
 Was client restrained at the time of the incident: ☐ Yes ☐ No
 Was client in seclusion at the time of the incident: ☐ Yes ☐ No
 Date report prepared: _____ Time report prepared: _____
 Name and Title of person completing report: _____
 Name and Title of supervisory staff reviewing report: _____

TYPE OF INCIDENT

Check all items that apply

Incident which requires **ADMISSION** to a hospital:

☐ Accident ☐ Injury ☐ Medication Error ☐ Other
Includes self-injurious behaviors

Death, Suicide Attempt, Runaway, Arrest:

☐ Death ☐ Suicide Attempt ☐ Runaway ☐ Arrest
Lasting more than 24 hours

Child Abuse or Neglect:

☐ Any case of abuse or neglect being investigated by a County Department of Social Services

Date reported to County DSS: _____ County DSS reported to: _____

Date accepted for Investigative Assessment: _____

County DSS investigating the report: _____ Date the investigation was initiated: _____

NARRATIVE

For Child Protective Services incidents describe the circumstances of the allegation. Include the place where the incident occurred and if the incident involved a staff member, foster parent or someone else (state relationship). Please state what was reported to the county department of social services (if known). Please note that for incidents involving child abuse or neglect you are NOT to conduct your own investigation. Describe the safety plan that has been put in place.

For Other incidents (not Child Protective Services) describe the incident. Include the place where the incident occurred, cause of the incident (if known), and the individuals involved. State any investigation that has been done to determine the cause of the incident and any corrective measures put in place or planned to be put in place as a result of the incident.

sample

NOTIFICATION

List other authorities that have been notified as a result of the incident:

County DSS: _____ Name of DSS worker contacted: _____ Date: _____

Licensing Consultant: _____ Date: _____

Law Enforcement: _____ Date: _____

Other authorities: _____ Date: _____

Medical Issues

Compared to children from similar economic backgrounds, children in foster care have much higher rates of serious emotional and behavioral problems, chronic physical disabilities, birth defects, developmental delays, and poor school achievement. Typically, these conditions are chronic, under-identified, and under-treated (FDCH Congressional Testimony 2005).

Children with such medical, developmental, and mental health problems are more likely to suffer multiple placement disruptions. They can easily end up in a destructive cycle, where the placement disruptions contribute to increased medical or mental health needs, which then endanger future placements (studies cited in Rubin et al. 2004).

What does this mean for licensing professionals? You want to be sure that foster parents receive the preparation, training, and support that will allow them to manage the child's needs. Initially foster parents may need help navigating the medical or mental health system to complete screenings and receive appropriate treatment. Later on, they may need help getting important information on medications, behavior management, diet, or other ways to manage a child's condition. For severe or chronic conditions, foster parents may be interested in support groups or online communities. As you know, some foster parents may just need to be pointed in the right direction for a resource. Others may need more step-by-step assistance.



Licensing professionals are responsible for ensuring foster parents receive the preparation, training, and support to meet and manage a child's needs.

You probably already know or can imagine the kinds of issues for which children in foster care commonly need treatment. As many as one third to one half of children entering foster care might have untreated medical problems that need attention (Horwitz, Owens & Simmons 2000), and over a third have serious levels of psychiatric impairment (studies cited in Lutz & Horvath 1997). Nationally, the overall level of mental health problems for children in foster care is estimated at 30% to 70%. STDs, anemia, and lead poisoning are at least twice as prevalent among children in foster care (Bilaver et al. 1999).

Here are general resources to start you or a foster family off in learning more about specific conditions:



Family Support Network of North Carolina

800-852-0042

www.fsnncc.org

Provides information, referrals, education, and parent-to-parent support for families with special-needs children

National Institute of Mental Health

www.nimh.nih.gov

Provide reliable information and links on medical and mental health conditions and treatment.

See the Administrative Code Rules

<<http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dss/licensing/10ANCAC70E.htm>> for specific regulations on medication administration, disposal, storage, review, and errors: 10A NCAC 70E.0501 (c).

Ethical Issues

Is it ever justified to “manipulate” a foster parent (into taking a child, or moving a child) just because we, as professionals, “just know” what is best? It is so tempting to play God, and we face that temptation all too frequently.

Licensing professionals frequently confront ethical issues, although we may not always think of these situations in ethical terms. Decisions you make can have very serious consequences for other people's lives (Ayers-Lopez & McCrory 2004). In addition, in an increasingly litigious society, professionals are more likely to be challenged for the decisions they have made and the impact they have had on families (Mattison 2000, cited in Ayers-Lopez & McCrory 2004). Therefore, every worker is under an obligation to consider the ethical dilemmas she faces, and to work with supervisors and colleagues to resolve them in a way that can be justified by accepted ethical and professional standards.



Periodically review the NASW Code of Ethics. This helps adjust your priorities back to the core values of our profession, and provides guidance when you are facing a situation with no simple, clear solution.

For social workers, our professional standards are defined in the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). You can find the code online at <www.socialworkers.org/pubs/codeNew/code.asp>. We are all familiar with some of the topics that the code covers, such as maintaining client confidentiality, ensuring clients' self-determination and informed consent in decision-making, and avoiding conflicts of interest. But it's helpful to review the full code periodically, both to adjust our priorities back to the core values of our profession, and also to help guide us when facing a situation with no simple, clear solution.

Common Ethical Dilemmas

We all strive to do the right thing in helping children and families, or we wouldn't be in this line of work. But ethical dilemmas come up when it's not so clear what the

right thing is. In fact, the more aware we are of our ethical code the more often we might recognize ethical issues in our work. Ayers-Lopez and McCrory (2004) discuss ethical dilemmas in this way:

Ethical dilemmas involve situations in which two or more worthy values are in conflict (Rokeach, 1973, cited in Mattison, 2000). For example, you would ordinarily want to protect clients from harm *and* protect their confidentiality. In certain situations you may not be able to do both. If you protect confidentiality there is a high likelihood that the client will be hurt, and conversely, in order to do what you think will protect the client from harm, you would have to break confidentiality (Reamer, 1999, p. 43). Often, these types of dilemmas come down to the question, “Do the ends justify the means?” Another type of ethical dilemma is when clients’ ideas of what is good for them differ from those of the professional. Decisions become even more complicated when the clients’ ideas of what is good for them aren’t in the best interest of others who are vulnerable (Abramson, 1996, cited in Regehr & Antle, 1997).

For human services workers, one study found the following to be the most common ethical violations (Montgomery & Still 2001):

- Dual or sequential relationships (having a personal or secondary relationship with a client while serving as his social worker or immediately after – e.g., hiring a client to do a job at your home)
- Professional competence
- Confidentiality
- Duty to warn others about potential harm
- Personal value conflicts
- Financial issues
- Cultural competence

Another study looked at the most common ethics violations reported to NASW for a ten-year period. Here they are in order of frequency:

- Boundary violations (254)
- Poor practice—services fall short of accepted standards (160)
- Competence—personal impairment; lack of knowledge, preparation or needed supervision (86)
- Record keeping (70)
- Honesty (51)
- Breach of confidentiality (41)
- Informed consent (37)
- Collegial violations—unfair termination of job, etc. (33)
- Billing violations (23)
- Conflicts of interest (22)

*The above was adapted from Ayers-Lopez, S. & McCrory, J. (2004). Ethical Decision Making in DFPS. **Protection Connection 11(2)**. Protective Services Training Institute of Texas.*

While this may give us a sense of the ethical challenges that social workers face in general, it's also important to know how to handle the specific issues that come up for licensing professionals.

Suggestions and Advice from Experienced Workers

- Be honest and open with families or potential families.
“Discuss problems openly and respectfully. It may be easier to avoid dealing with a potential problem, but avoiding it rarely helps it go away, and more often you end up with a bigger problem which ends up an ethical dilemma.”
- Treat all families the same, and apply rules consistently across families and across workers.
“If an agency's policies are fair and consistent, that goes a LONG way toward PREVENTING ethical dilemmas.”
- Have regular staffings of your cases with supervisors and colleagues so that others can help spot and resolve potential conflicts. Never make tough decisions alone. The more serious the impact will be on someone's life, the more obligation you have to seek advice.
“Is it ever justified to ‘manipulate’ a foster parent (into taking a child, or moving a child) just because we, as professionals, ‘just know’ what is best? It is so tempting to play God, and we face that temptation all too frequently. Whenever possible or whenever there is the slightest question, get an objective second opinion on placement questions.”
- The more you are informed and then share the information with foster families—about the child, the birth family, the history, and case plan—the easier it is to reach consensus about what is “best” for a child. Foster families need to know the big picture, and to have a realistic sense of what's happened and what's coming down the line.
“Complete communication with a foster family prepares them for things that might otherwise be scary or threatening or hurtful, like ‘It's Wednesday afternoon and we're moving your child Thursday.’ It helps avoid the things that people dread the most about foster care.”

What ethical issues related to licensing have you faced?

The following are examples of ethical concerns encountered by experienced licensing professionals from public and private agencies in North Carolina, along with relevant points from research, NASW's Code of Ethics, and consultants with the Licensing Authority.

1. Concerns about a POTENTIAL Foster Family's Abilities

Several families in the current MAPP/GPS class are confident they will make great foster parents, but I doubt their capacity to fully master the 12 skills. Yet my agency desperately needs more licensed foster families. Would it be appropriate to recommend these families for licensing, with the understanding that we will continue to work closely with them to develop their skills further?

In most cases, this situation cannot be considered an ethical dilemma. While families do have a right to be *considered* for licensing, your ultimate concern must be for the safety and well-being of children. Regardless of your agency's need for foster families, if you have strong doubts about a candidate's ability to care for children, it would be unethical for you to recommend that person for licensure. When this happens, it is best to be honest with the candidate—explain your decision and the reasons behind it while expressing appreciation for their commitment to children.

The question of whether to recommend a candidate for licensing becomes slightly less clear when your doubts about that person's abilities are uncertain. If the candidate possesses most of the 12 skills but you think he or she has weaknesses in a few areas, the ethical thing to do is to talk openly with the person about your concerns. Explain again that the period leading up to the decision about licensing is a mutual one in which the potential foster parents and the agency learn about each other and assess the parents' readiness to foster. Talk about the strengths the family possesses and explain that you need more information about their capacity or ability in certain areas. Identify together ways you might further assess their skills in the area of concern and how their skills in this area might be enhanced. Your honesty and directness will communicate your respect for the candidate and help ensure that both of you make the right decision about foster care licensure.

2. Concerns about a CURRENT Foster Family's Abilities

If parents are already licensed but we have reservations about their ability to care for a specific child, do we place with them anyway? Perhaps the family just needs experience. Then again, what if the placement disrupts? A crystal ball would be very helpful!

Although it can be hard to view people in terms that seem coldly analytical, the ethical thing to do when considering a placement match is to conduct a risk/benefit analysis. Is the risk to the child greater by being placed with an uncertain match, by

selecting a known family that would be overburdened, or by an emergency placement? What about the risk to the family—emotionally, physically, and possibly even legally—in taking a child that they’re not prepared to take? And what about the benefit of having this family available to take future children, instead of “burning out” a family that isn’t really in a position to take the placement?

To make this kind of decision you need input from colleagues and team members, as much information as you can get, and an honest conversation with the foster family. Some things you might think about are:

- What are my specific concerns about this family, and how would they interact with the particular needs of this child?
- How might the family’s strengths and resources counterbalance any areas of weakness so that they could meet the child’s needs?
- What specific supports could I put in place for this family so that it could meet this child’s needs (information, modeling, or training from me or someone else; services or activities for the child; respite; another foster family with a similar child to serve as a mentor)?
- How much time and energy can I (and other team members for the child) personally give to this family to make this placement work?
- What information does this family need to have to make the decision for themselves? What questions do I need to ask to assess whether they are ready or can be helped through this?

If the decision is made to place the child, consider putting a plan in place with the family to ensure you check in periodically on how things are going and what they need.

3. Sharing Information with Foster Families

When calling a foster family about taking a child, it may be tempting to “sugarcoat” the child’s problems or minimize a difficult situation, to get the family to agree to take the child. Personally I am in favor of full disclosure, but is it ever a good idea to withhold information in order to give a child a “fresh start” with a new family?

Similarly, sometimes the problem is that the foster parents are so eager for a child that they look at potential placements through the proverbial “rose colored glasses.” If you have the feeling that the parents are underestimating how demanding a child will be to care for, how do you get that across to them?

Another way to express this problem is by asking the question, “Does the end (finding a home for a child) justify the means (not fully disclosing information to the family)?”

The short answer is “no.” Based on the ethic of informed consent, which applies to all social workers, licensing professionals **must** provide foster families with full and accurate information about children before a placement is made so that foster parents can make an informed decision about whether to care for the children.



The ethic of informed consent dictates that foster families be fully and truthfully informed about a child before they make their decision to care for that child.

Sometimes you can avoid the dilemma between finding a home and allowing families to make an informed decision by providing a balanced picture of a child. This is when it's important to ask good questions of the referring agency and previous workers. Every child has strengths and hopes and dreams. Help the foster parents see the child in a positive light – what you would strive to see and show others if it were your child. (See the recommendation from the Casey Family Foundation in Chapter 9 for an easy way to have this kind of information available for every child – and allow the child to give herself a “fresh start.”) For foster parents who seem unable to realistically estimate the challenges, share some specific examples of problems the child has faced. Help them think concretely about how they would manage the issues in their family.

In addition, foster parents' empathy and understanding can be engaged by explaining what has happened in a child's life that has led to her problem behaviors. And most importantly, come up with something concrete that you can offer to the family to support them with the child – you'll call tomorrow to check in, you know of a book that could really help, you'll help them find some respite for an upcoming weekend, or you'll work collaboratively to be sure the child gets into appropriate treatment or activities.

Sometimes it can make a difference for families just knowing that there are options for them if they need help, and that you will work with them to thoughtfully and carefully make a change if it becomes necessary.

Even if none of these things work, remember that you are striving not just to find ANY family for a child, but a STABLE family. The ethically shaky practice of gently misleading a family won't pay off in the end if it falls through as soon as the family sees the problems for themselves. Long-term, the practice can cause harm by pushing a family away from fostering because they lose trust in your agency.

4. Birth Parent Objections about Foster Parents

What if the birth family doesn't want their child placed in a home due to the foster family's religious beliefs? Some object even though we explain the child is not required to engage in religious activities. If the child is doing well in the placement, do we move them to appease the parents based on the foster parent's religious affiliation?

This example illustrates the common dilemma between the duty to ensure equal opportunity and decision-making for all people, and the duty to respect a birth family's opinions and wishes on very important matters such as religious beliefs, culture, etc. Trying to avoid that dilemma by hiding the characteristics of a foster family raises the same ethical issues as hiding details about a child from a foster

family. In addition, it is not likely to be successful if the birth family has any visitation with the child or lives in the same community.

It might help add clarity to this issue if the concern—for example, a family's race—is viewed in the context of the most important duty of any agency and of our entire system: to provide a stable, safe, and nurturing home for every child. If your agency has recommended licensure for a family, the Licensing Authority has issued the license, and the family is willing to provide a home for the child, then the family is just as deserving of your agency's support as any other family.

If the birth family has a concern about a foster family, it should be discussed openly and respectfully, just as any other concern would be. But the decision to remove a child from a placement should be based first on whether the family is able to provide a safe, stable, and nurturing home for the child. This duty, in effect, “trumps” most other concerns. An agency should be no quicker—and no slower—to end the placement because a birth family objects to a foster family's race than they would if the birth family objected to anything else about a foster family's identity—from their religion to their socioeconomic status to their profession.



The decision to remove a child from a placement should be based first on whether the family is able to provide a safe, stable, and nurturing home for the child. This duty, in effect, “trumps” most other concerns.

In some cases, different members of the team might address the issue from different perspectives. The licensing professional might need to help reassure and inform the birth family about the foster family's qualities and qualifications, and about circumstances that influenced the placement. The foster care worker might need to explore with the family their feelings about having a child in placement, including natural reactions of jealousy, anger, resentment, and anxiety that can arise and undermine a successful placement.

5. Actively Recruiting Another Agency's Foster Parents

Several of my foster parents say they have been approached by staff from a new agency in town. These workers have told my foster parents life would be better if they transferred their license to their agency. Is the practice of courting another agency's foster parents against the rules? Is it ethical?

Although the rules do not prohibit one agency from recruiting another's foster parents, this practice is both unethical and short-sighted.

From an ethical standpoint, luring foster parents away from another agency is suspect for several reasons. First, it is possible that the stress of learning to work with a new agency and new people may overburden an already stressed foster family, which in extreme cases could lead to placement disruption. Clearly, such an outcome would be detrimental to children in foster care, and their safety and welfare is always our primary concern. Second, courting away another agency's foster parents potentially undermines relationships and supports in the family's life. This is contrary

to the Code of Ethics, which calls upon social workers to strengthen relationships among people to promote their well-being. Third, this practice goes against the social work value of integrity, which calls upon us to behave in a trustworthy manner.

Ultimately, courting another agency's foster parents is counterproductive. Though it may produce the desired results (increased placement capacity) in the short-term, in the long run it can poison interagency relationships, retard collaboration, and ultimately interfere with the efforts of the entire child welfare community to achieve positive results for children and families.

CHAPTER 9

IDEAS FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

from the Casey Family Programs' Breakthrough Series Collaborative

In This Chapter

- Recruiting Culturally and Racially Diverse Families
 - Working with Faith-based Organizations
 - Recruiting Families for Older Youth and Siblings
 - Retaining Resource Families
 - Listening to Youth in Placement
-



In her study of the foster care records of three states Gibbs (2005) found that 47%-62% of foster parents quit parenting within one year of the first placement in their home. She also found that in these states at least 20% of all foster homes quit fostering each year.

In their study of placement moves in Illinois, Zinn and colleagues (2006) found that child welfare workers reported that over three-quarters (75.9%) of children's most recent placement moves were due, at least in part, to foster parents' inability or unwillingness to continue fostering.

The Casey Family Foundation's Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) brought together teams from child welfare agencies across the country to improve recruitment and retention of foster families. The teams included a manager, a direct service provider, a foster family (referred to as a resource family), a worker from a public or private agency and, in some cases, a youth currently or previously in care. The teams generated ideas, quickly field tested them, and then made them available to all of the other teams to try. The participating child welfare agencies showed significantly improved outcomes in recruitment and retention of foster families.

The teams address goals that are familiar to every agency: providing more culturally sensitive recruitment; working effectively with faith-based organizations; finding homes for older youth and siblings; providing more support and inclusion for

foster families; improving foster family-birth family relationships; truly listening to the voices of children, foster families and birth families.

What makes this project especially useful is some of the very simple but effective strategies used to make those goals a reality. You can download the full report online at <<http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/BSCRecruitmentRetention.htm>>.

The Casey document provides specific strategies and success stories. Following are some examples.

Recruiting Culturally and Racially Diverse Families

Participating teams achieved great improvements in recruiting families of color and families from different cultures using very straightforward ideas such as:

- Certifying resource families of color as co-leaders of foster parent training
- Conducting joint recruitment and joint responses to inquiries with social workers and existing resource families of color
- Having existing resource families of color contact prospective families who are going through the process but whose momentum has slowed, to offer help and encouragement
- Translating brochures, fliers to schools, applications, and MAPP/GPS into Spanish or other relevant languages
- Conducting informational meetings with a primary speaker of the relevant language
- Staffing a resource line for resource families with bilingual, culturally sensitive staff, and/or providing a dedicated line with a message in multiple languages

Here are some of the measurable improvements from using combinations of these strategies.

- Massachusetts experienced a 60% increase in Cambodian resource families and a 45% increase in Latino resource families.
- New Mexico experienced a 57% increase in American Indian resource families.
- Erie County, New York experienced a 33% increase in Hispanic resource families.
- Oklahoma experienced a 66.7% increase in American Indian resource families.

Working with Faith-based Organizations

Below are two examples of how teams met the goal of working more effectively with faith-based organizations.

“The team from Shasta County, California [met] with pastors of eight churches during their monthly prayer breakfast... A mild form of competition even evolved among the churches regarding how many families could be recruited. This strategy eventually proved successful for numerous teams within the BSC. The pastors were able to give

voice to the idea that children going into care were the community's children and, as such, the community had the responsibility to meet their needs."

"The Carver County, Minnesota team was seeking a steady home for a child who had been bouncing between short-term caregivers for some time. Team members partnered with a local church and described this child in the bulletin and from the pulpit....they created a picture of the child in the hearts and minds of the church members – and in doing so, they found a family for the child."

Recruiting Families for Older Youth and Siblings

To recruit homes for older youth and siblings, teams implemented some of the following ideas.

- Ask youth earlier and more often who matters most in their lives, before those connections dissolve.
- Use ecomaps and genograms to identify connections and ways to maintain sibling groups.
- Engage residential facilities to identify who is visiting youth, who the youth is contacting, and who the youth is talking about.
- Let families meet older youth and siblings in various situations, such as orientations and "while you are waiting parties." Include resource families who have experience with older youth and enjoy being around them.
- Create buddy systems and mentor programs that pair new and experienced resource families, to help the families and youth form connections.
- Engage former resource families and churches to serve as mentors for youth.

Here are some of the measurable improvements from these strategies.

- The number of resource families who felt competent and willing to care for teens improved by 71% in Wyoming, 158% in New Mexico and 96% in Catawba County, North Carolina.
- The number of sibling groups placed together increased 100% in Catawba County, North Carolina, 80% in Hamilton County, Ohio, and 33% in Erie County, New York.
- Texas reduced the time that siblings were apart by 73%.

Retaining Resource Families

Teams also looked at how to retain resource families. Following are some of their successful ideas that focus on support, responsiveness, and inclusion.

- Respond to initial inquiries from prospective resource families within 24 hours. Follow up with families who make initial inquiries but don't continue in the process.
- Invite the resource family to take part in the case planning process, and share existing case plans with the resource family.

- Develop two-call policies that allow resource families to contact the supervisor if they do not hear back from their worker within 24 hours.
- Use e-mail in addition to phone calls to communicate.
- Provide information about the child and his family of origin to the resource family prior to placement.
- Provide mentors or “buddies” for new resource families.
- Hold a facilitated dialogue between resource families and staff to discuss and understand people’s underlying values and concerns.

Listening to Youth in Placement

What about listening to youth in placement? A young woman participating on a team asked one of the most meaningful questions: “Why don’t you tell us anything about the resource family before you place us there? Do you have any idea what it feels like to be picked up from everything you know and dropped off with a total stranger?”

This led to two of the most powerful suggestions:

- “Create resource family profile sheets so that youth know something about their foster parents... ‘Tell us what they eat, what kind of music they listen to, what their house looks like.’” This could be done by resource families during their pre-service training.



Create youth profile sheets so that youth can tell their prospective families something about themselves in their own words.

- “Create youth profile sheets so that youth can tell their prospective families something about themselves in their own words. A young person in the BSC reminded everyone that all resource families typically knew about them was their thick case file, which often said nothing good. The young people in the BSC wanted an opportunity to tell families what they liked to eat, what they liked to watch on TV, what their hobbies were, and what their hopes and dreams were.”

Source: Casey Family Programs. (2005). Recruitment and retention of resource families: Promising practices and lessons learned. Breakthrough Series Collaborative, Number 001. Seattle, WA.

Ideas from Foster Parents**Recruitment**

- Ask current foster parents to meet individually or in a group setting with prospective foster parents to network and answer questions.
- Allow prospective foster parents to shadow or observe current foster parents in a day of their lives. This should be a normal, realistic day.
- Ask a current foster parent to keep a journal of situations, feelings, and the ups and downs of fostering, then make this journal available to prospective foster parents (edited if necessary).

Ideas from Foster Parents**Support and Retention**

- Invite foster parents to do an in-service for your agency's social workers to teach them what's really important to families and children in placement.
- Assign seasoned foster parents as mentors to new foster parents.
- Reward foster parents that have been fostering five or more years with donated items such as gift certificates for restaurants, massages, etc.
- Offer opportunities for foster families to socialize and network.
- Provide or help start a monthly support group for foster parents in your county.
- Keep foster parents "in the loop" by offering a newsletter, information sessions, or a county website.
- Have a process for parents to vent, such as a hotline or written feedback box.
- Whenever possible, schedule simultaneous visits with other workers. Schedule meetings at family-friendly times, such as when parents are not working.
- Provide gas vouchers for meetings or therapy appointments, especially for children with many services and activities.
- Advocate for foster parents– work with other professionals to be sure foster parents are informed and included in decision-making.

CHAPTER 10

TRAINING 101

In This Chapter

- Requirements and Resources for Licensing Professionals
 1. Public Agency Licensing Staff
 2. Private Agency Licensing Staff
 3. Training Resources for Licensing Staff
 - Requirements for Family Foster Care Parents
 - Requirements for Therapeutic Foster Parents
 - Training Resources for Foster Parents
-

Ongoing professional learning is essential to the successful performance of everyone involved with child welfare. Adequate, timely training—or the lack thereof—can also affect whether people stay involved with the child welfare system, something that can have a huge impact on everyone, especially children and their families. This section of the guide describes North Carolina's training requirements for licensing professionals and foster parents. It also offers information about various resources you can use to fulfill those training requirements.

Requirements for Licensing Professionals

1. Public Agency Licensing Staff

Prior to direct client contact, licensing professionals with North Carolina County departments of social services must complete a minimum of 72 hours of pre-service training. In most cases this is accomplished by attending *Child Welfare in North Carolina* and completing that course's Transfer of Learning packet.

Public agency licensing professionals must also complete an additional 66 hours of training in the first year of employment. This must include the following courses:

- *Legal Aspects of Child Welfare in North Carolina* (12 hours)
- *Medical Aspects of Child Welfare in North Carolina* (12 hours)
- *Child Development in Families at Risk* (12 hours)
- *The Effects of Separation and Loss on Attachment* (12 hours)
- *Foster Family Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services* (18 hours)

Every year after their first year of employment, public agency licensing professionals must complete 24 hours of continuing education.

Because their jobs involve recruiting, training, and supporting foster parents, public agency licensing professionals will also want to consider becoming certified in *Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting: Group Preparation and Selection*, North Carolina's preferred foster parent training curriculum. During the eight days of this foster parent training course (also called MAPP/GPS), social workers learn to use the group preparation and selection program and to help prospective foster and adoptive parents identify their strengths and needs in relation to fostering and adopting. MAPP/GPS requires 52 contact training hours and can be credited toward the 24-hour continuing education requirement. After attending this course workers are officially MAPP-certified. (Candidates must have a Bachelors or Masters degree in social work or related field from a college or university listed in the most current edition of the Higher Education Directory and at least two years social work experience; foster parents who co-lead MAPP/GPS are exempt from this requirement.) The following MAPP-related courses are also available, once a person has become MAPP-certified:

- *Deciding Together: A Program to Prepare Families for Foster Care and Adoption on an Individual Basis* (16 hours)
- *Fostering and Adopting the Child Who Has Been Sexually Abused* (26 hours)
- *Shared Parenting* (18 hours)

DSS workers who move from another child welfare position to assume a licensing position and who have already met the pre-service training requirements at the time of their employment are not required to attend *Child Welfare in North Carolina*. However, these individuals are required to attend job-specific training (*Foster Family Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services*) within three months of assuming licensing responsibilities.



To learn about the courses available, find training dates and locations, and register for the courses, go to <<http://www.ncswtrain.org>>.

The NC Division of Social Services provides training for DSS licensing professionals through its Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership. To learn more about the courses available, to find training dates and locations, and to apply for registration for these courses, consult your agency's copy of the current NCDSS Family Support and Child Welfare Services Training Calendar or go to <<http://www.ncswtrain.org>>.

2. Private Agency Licensing Staff

The training requirements and resources available to licensing professionals from North Carolina's private child-placing agencies and mental health/therapeutic foster care facilities vary a great deal. The state's licensing rules say only that governing bodies of private agencies must establish and use personnel practices for selection

and retention of staff which are sufficient to operate the agency (10A NCAC 70F .0202) and that they maintain a log of each employee's training in his or her personnel file (10A NCAC 70F .0206).

Staff from private organizations licensed as child-placing agencies in North Carolina are eligible to attend certain courses offered through the NC Division of Social Services' Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership. For example, licensing professionals from private agencies may attend *Foster Family Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services* (a three-day, 18 credit hour course) and adoption workers from private agencies may attend *Adoptions in Child Welfare Services* (a three-day, 18 credit hour course).

In addition, all private agency staff in the area of foster care and adoption may attend the train-the-trainer for *Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting: Group Preparation and Selection*. During the eight days of this foster parent training course (also called MAPP/GPS), social workers learn to use the group preparation and selection program and to help prospective foster and adoptive parents identify their strengths and needs in relation to fostering and adopting. In order to be eligible to attend this training, staff must be working for a private agency that has been approved by the state. Candidates must have a Bachelors or Masters degree in social work or related field from a college or university listed in the most current edition of the Higher Education Directory and at least two years social work experience (foster parents who co-lead MAPP/GPS are exempt from this requirement).

After attending *Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting: Group Preparation and Selection* workers are officially MAPP-certified, and so become eligible to attend the following MAPP-related courses:

- *Deciding Together: A Program to Prepare Families for Foster Care and Adoption on an Individual Basis* (16 hours)
- *Fostering and Adopting the Child Who Has Been Sexually Abused* (26 hours)

Private agency staff members who are not MAPP-certified may attend *Shared Parenting*, a three-day course that explores the philosophy, rationale, and strategies for developing positive relationships and communication between the agency, birth parents, and foster and adoptive parents. Staff members who are MAPP-certified will receive information about shared parenting as part of their MAPP/GPS materials.

Private agency workers who are contracted by a county DSS to provide public child welfare services must fulfill the same training requirements as county DSS child welfare workers. For more on this, see the preceding section on training for public agency licensing professionals.

To learn more about the courses available through the NC Division of Social Services Family Support and Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership, to find training dates and locations, and to register for courses, consult your agency's copy of the current NCDSS Family Support and Child Welfare Services Training Calendar or go to <<http://www.ncswtrain.org>>.

3. Training Resources for Licensing Professionals

In addition to the courses offered by the NC Division of Social Services, licensing professionals seeking to further their professional development may wish to consult the following resources.

- **Children's Services Practice Notes.** Each issue of this practice-oriented child welfare publication is dedicated to a specific topic such as separation and attachment, juvenile sex offenders, and promoting resiliency in families and children. To receive notification when new issues appear online, send a message with "Subscribe Practice Notes" in the subject line to johnmcmahon@mindspring.com. *Practice Notes* can be found online at <http://www.practicenotes.org>
- **Training Matters.** Each issue of this publication provides information about where to find training on specific topics (e.g., posttraumatic stress disorder, working with American Indian families) and updates on North Carolina's child welfare training system. To receive notification when new issues appear online, send a message with "Subscribe Training Matters" in the subject line to johnmcmahon@mindspring.com. *Training Matters* can be found online at <http://www.trainingmatters-nc.org>
- **Child Trauma Academy.** Online courses on human development, childhood trauma, and the impact of working with high-risk children and families. Child Trauma Academy can be found online at www.childtraumaacademy.com
- **The University of Michigan's "Training Program for Child Welfare Supervisors."** This free online course offers a wide variety of modules that will help supervisors and frontline workers deepen their understanding of child welfare issues. www.ssw.umich.edu/tpcws/outcomeOrientedServices/
- **"Out-of-Home Placements due to Parent Chemical Abuse: Connections to Methamphetamine Addiction."** A free course from the University of Minnesota. http://ssw.che.umn.edu/CASCW/meth_cm_summary.html
- **National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning.** A training, technical assistance, and information services organization dedicated to strengthening the capacity of child welfare agencies to institutionalize a safety-focused, family-centered, and community-based approach to meet the needs of children, youth, and families. <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/>
- **National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information.** The Clearinghouse connects professionals to practical, timely, and essential information on programs, research, legislation, and statistics to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families. <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/>

Requirements for Family Foster Care Parents

1. Pre-service Training Required for Initial Licensure

The health, safety, and well-being of children in foster care depend on the ability of their foster families to care for them in a nurturing, supportive way. Most children who enter foster care have had life experiences that have been traumatic and hurtful. As a result, their ability to trust adults is impaired. Foster families need to have a broad range of knowledge, strong parenting skills, self-awareness, and patience to care for the children in their home. To help families broaden their knowledge and skills, supervising agencies must provide foster parent applicants with 30 hours of pre-service training prior to licensure. Pre-service training must address:

- General orientation to foster care
- Communication skills
- Understanding the dynamics of the foster care and adoption process
- Separation and loss
- Attachment and trust
- Child development
- Behavior management
- Working with birth families and maintaining connections
- Lifebook preparation
- Planned moves and the impact of disruptions
- The impact of placement on foster and adoptive families
- Teamwork to achieve permanence
- Cultural sensitivity
- Confidentiality
- Health and safety

Advice from a foster parent

Try to understand you can't teach a foster parent all she needs to know in such a short time. Every day we will learn something new that we were not trained to do.

2. CPR, First Aid, and Universal Precautions Training

Before a foster child is placed with the foster family, Supervising Agencies must provide foster parents with training in First Aid, CPR, and Universal Precautions. Training shall be specific to the population of children served by the foster parents and updated as required. Training in these areas must be such as those provided by the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, or equivalent organizations. Training must be updated as required by these organizations.

3. Training in Medication Administration

Child-placing agencies must also ensure that foster parents are trained in medication administration before a child is placed in their homes (10A NCAC 70E .1117, item 4).

4. In-service Training Required for Relicensure

Supervising Agencies must provide or otherwise ensure that foster parents receive 10 hours of in-service training every year. Foster parents must have 20 hours of in-service training in order to be relicensed. This in-service training may be child-specific or it may concern issues relevant to the general population of children in foster care. In general, in-service training must be on topics that enhance the skills of foster parents and promote stability for children. Licensing rules state that a foster parent may complete relevant training provided by a community college, a licensed child placing agency, or other departments of state or county governments and that, upon approval by the Supervising Agency, such training can count toward meeting the annual 10-hour in-service training requirement.



In-service training must be on topics that enhance the skills of foster parents and promote stability for children.

County departments of social services and private child-placing agencies are urged to develop their own curricula for in-service training so that training may be available throughout the year for foster parents. The following is a list of possible alternatives agencies may choose to use to meet the in-service training requirement:

- Relevant video tapes with a questionnaire to document that the family has viewed the videotape.
- Training provided by the therapist of a foster child. Documentation by the therapist should be obtained for the case record.
- Families may read newsletters, books, manuals, etc. that directly relate to foster parenting and the needs of children in their home.
- Attendance at state, regional, and national foster parent conferences.
- Attendance at local foster parent association meetings as long as the meetings contain information related to the needs of children in foster care.

Supervising Agencies are responsible for documenting in the foster parent record the type of activity the foster parent has completed to fulfill the annual in-service training requirement.

5. HIV Training

To receive the HIV supplemental payment, families caring for children with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) or AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) must attend six hours of advanced medical training annually. This training, which must cover topics relevant to HIV or AIDS, counts toward the foster parents' annual 10-hour in-service training requirement.

6. Physical Restraint Holds Training

Before they can use physical restraint holds, foster parents must complete at least 16 hours of training by a certified/approved trainer in behavior management. The

training must include techniques for de-escalating problem behavior, the appropriate use of physical restraint holds recognized by the Licensing Authority as approved physical restraint holds, monitoring of vital indicators, and debriefing children and foster parents involved in physical restraint holds. To remain certified to use physical restraint holds, every year foster parents must complete at least eight hours of behavior management training by a certified/approved trainer, including techniques for de-escalating problem behavior. This training counts toward the foster parents' annual in-service training requirement. For a listing of NC child-placing agencies that have approved physical restraint hold training curricula go to <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas/training/rscurricula/agencylist10-18-06web.pdf>.

7. Child-Specific Training

The out-of-home family services agreement may specify training family foster parents shall receive while caring for a family foster child. This training counts toward the foster parents' annual in-service training requirement.

Requirements for Therapeutic Foster Parents

1. Pre-service Training Required for Initial Licensure

Supervising Agencies must provide therapeutic foster parents with the same pre-service training provided to family foster care parents, which is described above. In addition, they must also provide therapeutic foster parents with an additional 10 hours of specific training in behavioral mental health treatment services, which is not limited to but must include the following:

- Role of the therapeutic foster parent;
- Safety planning; and
- Managing behaviors.

The Division of Social Services has developed a 10-hour, pre-service course for therapeutic foster parents called "Becoming a Therapeutic Foster Parent" that covers these required topics.

2. Additional Training during the First Year of TFC Licensure

- Dynamics of emotionally disturbed and substance abusing youth and families
- Symptoms of substance abuse
- Needs of emotionally disturbed and substance abusing youth in family settings
- Development of the person-centered plan/child and family plan
- Medication administration
- Crisis intervention

3. CPR, First Aid, and Universal Precautions Training

Requirements are the same as for parents providing family foster care.

4. Training in Medication Administration

Requirements are the same as for parents providing family foster care.

5. In-service Training Required for Relicensure

Requirements are the same as for parents providing family foster care. May count training as stated in 2 above.

6. HIV Training

Requirements are the same as for parents providing family foster care.

7. Physical Restraint Holds Training

Requirements are the same as for parents providing family foster care.

8. Child-Specific Training

The person-centered plan may specify training the therapeutic foster parent shall receive while caring for a therapeutic foster child. This training counts toward the foster parents' annual in-service training requirement.



Licensing professionals should work with foster parents to document the training that they attend. This is especially important for transfers.

Training Resources for Foster Parents

To remain licensed, every foster parent in North Carolina must attend 10 hours of in-service training every year. For most foster parents this is not a problem—they are already on the lookout for ways to expand their knowledge and enhance their parenting skills so they can provide the best possible care to the children in their homes. To help them in this ongoing quest, the following list describes potential training resources.

- **Fostering Perspectives.** A newsletter by and for North Carolina's foster and adoptive parents, and child welfare professionals. Foster parents who read an issue cover to cover and take the quiz on that issue can present their answers to their licensing professional for 30 minutes credit toward relicensure. To receive notification when new issues appear online, send a message with "Subscribe FP" in the subject line to johnmcmahon@mindspring.com. *Fostering Perspectives* is online at <http://www.fosteringperspectives.org>.
- **NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association.** For information about annual conferences and other NCFAPA training opportunities go to www.ncfapa.org.

- **Local Foster Parent Associations.** Contact the association nearest you (it may be in a neighboring county) to find out if they have any training events scheduled. To obtain the contact information for foster parent associations in your area, foster parents should call their licensing worker or contact the NC Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (e-mail: ncfapa@uncg.edu).
- **FosterClub.** Offers continuing education credits free at www.fosterclub.com/training. To learn more call 503/717-1552 or e-mail: celeste@fosterclub.com.
- **Foster Parent College.** Online courses available for a fee. To access these you will want to have an Internet connection faster than dial-up. Also available on DVD for personal use by parents and for group use by organizations. To learn more visit www.FosterParentCollege.com, call 800/777-6636, or e-mail fpc@SocialLearning.com.
- **Foster Care and Adoptive Community.** Offers 61 courses. FCAC contracts with states and agencies to provide online training to foster families. The per-course cost for individuals is very low. Go to: www.fosterparents.com
- **Child Trauma Academy.** Online courses on human development, childhood trauma, and the impact of working with high-risk children and families. At www.childtraumaacademy.com

Licensing workers should strongly advise foster parents to check in with them before spending money on training to make sure that the training they have selected is considered valid and appropriate by the Supervising Agency.

Suggestions from Foster Parents

- Foster parents need to know how to better handle the grief process children go through both at removal from the home and then again when the child is to be adopted and they realize that, indeed, they are not ever going back home.
- At each age group we should know what's available for children. The more we keep them busy on positive things the less time they have for negative things.
- Find out what foster parents would like to have training in that is meaningful to help foster a child.
- Aid arrangement of childcare or provide childcare during training and meetings.
- Provide an agenda or synopsis of training to help parents pick training that will benefit them. (For example, not all "cultural issues" classes are the same.)
- Provide information on alternative training options, i.e., books, tapes, correspondence courses.
- Let foster parents know about trainings other agencies are doing.
- If a worker is knowledgeable, valuable training can take place at visits.
- Use knowledgeable families to train other families.

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APPENDIX

- A. North Carolina County Numbers
- B. Race Codes
- C. Important Contacts for Foster Care Licensing
- D. Key Phone Numbers
- E. Initial Licensing Package Checklist
- F. Foster Parent File Checklist for Initial Licensing
- G. Beliefs Underlying the Family-Centered Approach
- H. The 12 Skills for Successful Foster and Adoptive Parenting
- I. The Six Principles of Partnership
- J. Rights and Responsibilities
- K. Information to Share with Prospective Foster Parents
- L. Fingerprinting Forms
- M. Bubble Sheet and Instructions
- N. Guidelines for Sexual Safety Plans for Foster Families
- O. Family-Friendly Checklist for Relicensing
- P. Thank You to Foster Parents

A. NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY NUMBERS

1	Alamance	35	Franklin	69	Pamlico
2	Alexander	36	Gaston	70	Pasquotank
3	Alleghany	37	Gates	71	Pender
4	Anson	38	Graham	72	Perquimans
5	Ashe	39	Granville	73	Person
6	Avery	40	Greene	74	Pitt
7	Beaufort	41	Guilford	75	Polk
8	Bertie	42	Halifax	76	Randolph
9	Bladen	43	Harnett	77	Richmond
10	Brunswick	44	Haywood	78	Robeson
11	Buncombe	45	Henderson	79	Rockingham
12	Burke	46	Hertford	80	Rowan
13	Cabarrus	47	Hoke	81	Rutherford
14	Caldwell	48	Hyde	82	Sampson
15	Camden	49	Iredell	83	Scotland
16	Carteret	50	Jackson	84	Stanly
17	Caswell	51	Johnston	85	Stokes
18	Catawba	52	Jones	86	Surry
19	Chatham	53	Lee	87	Swain
20	Cherokee	54	Lenoir	88	Transylvania
21	Chowan	55	Lincoln	89	Tyrrell
22	Clay	56	Macon	90	Union
23	Cleveland	57	Madison	91	Vance
24	Columbus	58	Martin	92	Wake
25	Craven	59	McDowell	93	Warren
26	Cumberland	60	Mecklenburg	94	Washington
27	Currituck	61	Mitchell	95	Watauga
28	Dare	62	Montgomery	96	Wayne
29	Davidson	63	Moore	97	Wilkes
30	Davie	64	Nash	98	Wilson
31	Duplin	65	New Hanover	99	Yadkin
32	Durham	66	Northampton	100	Yancey
33	Edgecombe	67	Onslow		
34	Forsyth	68	Orange		

B. RACE CODES

Race codes and possible combinations that could be selected for DSS-5015 fields 10 and 17 are:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 01 = White Native (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 36 = White/Black/Asian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 02 = White (Hispanic or Latino) | 37 = White/Black/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 03 = Black (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 38 = White/Black/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 04 = Black (Hispanic or Latino) | 39 = White/American Indian or Alaskan Native/Asian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 05 = American Indian or Alaskan Native (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 40 = White/American Indian or Alaskan Native/Asian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 06 = American Indian or Alaskan Native (Hispanic or Latino) | 41 = White/American Indian or Alaska. Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 07 = Asian (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 42 = White/American Indian or Alaskan. Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pac. Islander (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 08 = Asian (Hispanic or Latino) | 43 = White/Asian/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 09 = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 44 = White/Asian/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 10 = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hispanic or Latino) | 45 = Black/American Ind. or Alaskan/Asian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 11 = Unable to Determine (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 46 = Black/American Ind. or Alaskan/Asian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 12 = Unable to Determine (Hispanic or Latino) | 47 = Black/American Ind. or Alaskan/Native/Hawaiian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 13 = White/Black (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 48 = Black/American Ind. or Alaskan Native/Hawaiian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 14 = White/Black (Hispanic or Latino) | 49 = Black/Asian/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 15 = White/American Indian or Alaskan Native (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 50 = Black/Asian/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 16 = White/American Indian or Alaskan Native (Hispanic or Latino) | 51 = American Indian/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 17 = White/Asian (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 52 = American Indian/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 18 = White/Asian (Hispanic or Latino) | 53 = White/Black/American Indian/Asian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 19 = White/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 54 = White/Black/American Indian/Asian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 20 = White/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hispanic or Latino) | 55 = White/Black/American Indian/Native Hawaiian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 21 = Black/American Indian or Alaskan Native (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 56 = White/Black/American Indian/Native Hawaiian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 22 = Black/American Indian or Alaskan Native (Hispanic or Latino) | 57 = White/Black/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 23 = Black/Asian (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 58 = White/Black/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 24 = Black/Asian (Hispanic or Latino) | 59 = White/American Indian/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 25 = Black/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 60 = White/American Indian/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 26 = Black/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hispanic or Latino) | 61 = Black/American Indian/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 27 = American Indian or Alaskan Native/Asian (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 62 = Black/American Indian/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 28 = American Indian or Alaskan Native/Asian (Hispanic or Latino) | 63 = White/Black/American Indian/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Non Hispanic or Latino) |
| 29 = American Indian or Alaskan Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic or Latino) | 64 = White/Black/American Indian/Asian/Native Hawaiian (Hispanic or Latino) |
| 30 = American Indian or Alaskan Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hispanic or Latino) | |
| 31 = Asian/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Non Hispanic or Latino) | |
| 32 = Asian/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Hispanic or Latino) | |
| 33 = White/Black/American Indian or Alaskan Native (Non Hispanic or Latino) | |
| 34 = White/Black/American Indian or Alaskan Native (Hispanic or Latino) | |
| 35 = White/Black/Asian (Non Hispanic or Latino) | |

C. IMPORTANT CONTACTS FOR FOSTER CARE LICENSING

Fingerprints

Send to:

NC Division of Child Development
Criminal Records Check Unit
2201 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2201

800/859-0829 (Ask to speak to someone in the Criminal Record Check Unit)

Financial, Rates, and Reimbursement Issues

Tina Bumgarner, Foster Care Financial Resource Coordinator
NC Division of Social Services
704/462-2686
Tina.Bumgarner@ncmail.net

Licensing Authority

NC Division of Social Services
Regulatory and Licensing Services Team
952 Old U. S. 70 Highway
Black Mountain, NC 28711
828/669-3388

E. INITIAL LICENSING PACKAGE CHECKLIST

Name(s) _____

- ☐ Cover letter with contact information
- ☐ Foster Care Facility License Action Request (DSS-5015)
- ☐ Foster Home License Application (DSS-5016)
- ☐ Mutual Home Assessment Narrative
 - Family history
 - 12 skills assessment
 - Assessment of willingness participate in Shared Parenting requirements
 - Assessment of Financial ability to provide foster care
 - Contact dates
- ☐ Request for Medical Information (DSS-5156)—Physicals for all household members
- ☐ Medical History Form (DSS-5017)—All household members
- ☐ T.B. Results (on ALL adult members of household)
- ☐ SBI Fingerprint Clearance Letter (all adults over 18 years of age)
- ☐ Fire Inspection (DSS-1515)
- ☐ Environmental and Health Regulations Checklist (DSS-5150)

*** Please make a copy of all forms and place in file ***

F. FOSTER PARENT AGENCY FILE CHECKLIST FOR INITIAL LICENSING

Name(s) _____

Required for all agencies:

- ☐ Foster Parent application(s)
- ☐ 3 Non-relative References (all adults)
- ☐ Signed Foster Parenting Agreement
- ☐ Signed Discipline Agreement
- ☐ Signed DHHS-001, Criminal Record Check Identifying Form for Adoptive and Foster Parents
(needed on all adults 18 years of age and older for fingerprint check)
- ☐ NC Department of Corrections Check (all adults)
- ☐ Local Criminal Record Check (all adults)
- ☐ Central Registry Check (all adults)
- ☐ NC Sex Offender & Public Protection Registry Check
- ☐ Nurse Aide I and Health Care Personnel Registry Check
- ☐ Notice of Mandatory Criminal History Check (DSS- 5280)
- ☐ A current copy of full licensing package submitted to Licensing Authority

These or other documents may be required by your agency:

- ☐ Personal profile
- ☐ Car registration and current driver license
- ☐ Safety and emissions form
- ☐ Copy of marriage license/divorce decree
- ☐ Photo of foster parents

G. BELIEFS UNDERLYING THE FAMILY-CENTERED APPROACH

As it seeks to achieve safety, permanence, and well-being for children through its Multiple Response System, the NC Division of Social Services' Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section embraces and supports the family-centered approach to child welfare practice. Underlying this approach are the following beliefs.

1. Safety of the child is the first concern.
2. Children have the right to their family.
3. The family is the fundamental resource for the nurturing of children.
4. Parents should be supported in their efforts to care for their children.
5. Families are diverse and have the right to be respected for their special cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious traditions; children can flourish in different types of families.
6. A crisis is an opportunity for change.
7. Inappropriate intervention can do harm.
8. Families who seem hopeless can grow and change.
9. Family members are our colleagues.
10. It is our job to instill hope.

H. THE TWELVE SKILLS FOR SUCCESSFUL FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTING

A licensed foster parent should have the capacity to exercise each of the following skills with the children in their care:

1. Assess individual and family strengths and needs and building on strengths and meeting needs
2. Use and develop effective communication
3. Identify the strengths and needs of children placed in the home
4. Build on children's strengths and meeting the needs of children placed in the home
5. Develop partnerships with children placed in the home, birth families, the agency and the community to develop and carry out plans for permanency
6. Help children placed in the home develop skills to manage loss and skills to form attachments
7. Help children placed in the home manage their behaviors
8. Help children placed in the home maintain and develop relationships that will keep them connected to their pasts
9. Help children placed in the home build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural and racial identity
10. Provide a safe and healthy environment for children placed in the home which keeps them free from harm
11. Assess the ways in which providing foster or therapeutic foster care affects the family
12. Make an informed decision regarding providing foster or therapeutic foster care

I. SIX PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP

The NC Division of Social Services' Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section embraces the following six family-centered principles, which represent the philosophical foundation of the Multiple Response System (MRS).

1. **Everyone desires respect.** This principle is based on the idea that all people have worth and recognizes everyone's right to self-determination, to make their own decisions about their lives. Acceptance of this principle leads one to treat families with respect and to honor their opinions and world view. True partnership is impossible without mutual respect.
2. **Everyone needs to be heard.** This principle is based on Stephen R. Covey's "seek first to understand" and is accomplished primarily through empathic listening. While empathic listening looks very much like active or reflective listening, what differentiates it is the listener's motivation. Active and reflective listening are techniques that are often used to manage or manipulate someone's behavior so that the listener can advance his own agenda. Empathic listening is motivated by the listener's desire to truly understand someone's point of view—to enter someone's frame of reference—without a personal agenda. When one feels heard and understood, defensiveness and resistance are unnecessary, and solutions can be sought.
3. **Everyone has strengths.** This principle recognizes that all people have many resources, past successes, abilities, talents, dreams, etc. that provide the raw material for solutions and future success. As "helpers" we become involved with people because of their problems; these problems then become a filter that obscures our ability to see strengths. Acceptance of this principle doesn't mean that one ignores or minimizes problems; it means that one works hard to identify strengths as well as problems so that the helper and the client have a more balanced, accurate, and hopeful picture.
4. **Judgments can wait.** This principle recognizes that once a judgment is made, one's tendency is to stop gathering new information or to interpret in light of the prior judgment. Therefore, since a helper's judgments can have an immense impact on a family's life, it is only fair to delay judgment as long as possible, then to hold it lightly, while remaining open to new information and willing to change one's mind. Acceptance of this principle does not mean that decisions regarding safety cannot be made quickly; it simply requires that ultimate judgments be very well considered.
5. **Partners share power.** This principle is based on the premise that power differentials create obstacles to partnership. Since society confers power upon the helper, it is the helper's responsibility to create a partnership with a family, especially those who appear hostile, resistant, etc. Clients do not owe us their cooperation: we must earn it.
6. **Partnership is a process.** This principle recognizes that each of the six principles is part of a greater whole. While each has merit on its own, all are necessary for partnership. Each principle supports and strengthens the others. In addition, this principle acknowledges that putting the principles into practice consistently is hard. Acceptance of the principles is not enough; it requires intention and attention to practice the principles.

Source: Bringing It All Back Home Study Center. (2002). *Partners in change: A new perspective on child protective services (curriculum)*. Morganton, NC: Author.

J. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Foster Parents

1. Foster Parent Responsibilities

- a. Regarding Children in Foster Care:
 - Foster parents must ensure that each foster child's rights (as articulated below) are respected and their needs met
- b. Regarding the Child's Parents or Guardians:
 - When so advised by the agency, foster parents shall make every effort to support, encourage, and enhance the child's relationship with the child's parents or guardians
 - Foster parents should make no independent plans for a child to visit the home of the child's parents, guardians, or relatives without prior consent from the Supervising Agency
- c. Regarding the Supervising Agency, foster parents agree to:
 - Allow the representative of the agency to visit the home in conjunction with licensing procedures, foster care planning, and placement
 - Accept children into the home only through the agency and not through other individuals, agencies, or institutions
 - Promote continuous contact and exchange of information between the agency and the foster parents about matters affecting the adjustment of any child placed in the home. The foster parents shall agree to keep these matters confidential and to discuss them only with the agency staff members, or with other professional people designated by the agency
 - Obtain the permission of the agency if the child is to be out of the home for a period exceeding two nights
 - Report to the agency any changes in the composition of the household, change of address, or change in the employment status of any adult member of the household
 - Adhere to the agency's plan of medical care, both for routine care and treatment and for emergency care and hospitalization
 - Provide any child placed in the home with supervision at all times while the child is in the home, and not leave the child unsupervised and to adhere to supervision requirements specified in the out of home family services agreement or person-centered plan/child and family plan

2. Foster Parent Rights

- a. To receive information and support from the Supervising Agency, including the items described under "Supervising Agency Responsibilities" below, such as monthly board payments and including foster parents as part of the decision-making team for a child

- b. To ask the Supervising Agency for support, information, and involvement whenever it is needed
- c. To be informed about court dates, meetings with the GAL, and IEP meetings when appropriate
- d. To obtain other sources of support, including through foster parent associations and their own informal support networks
- e. To understand their liability issues and be informed about insurance and other resources to assist with this issue
- f. To file for grievances
- g. To end the licensing relationship (i.e., to stop fostering)
- h. To seek to continue fostering through another public or private Supervising Agency

B. Supervising Agencies

1. Agency Responsibilities

- a. To recruit, train, support, and assess foster parents in an ongoing way
- b. In addition, the agency shall:
 - Assume responsibility for the overall planning for the child, and to assist the foster parents in meeting their day-to-day responsibility toward the child
 - Inform the foster parents concerning the agency's procedures and financial responsibility for obtaining medical care and hospitalization
 - Pay the foster parents a monthly room and board payment, and if applicable, a difficulty of care payment or respite care payment for children placed in the home; to discuss with the parents any plans to remove a child from the foster home; and to give the foster parents notice before removing a child
 - Visit the foster home and child according to the out of home family services agreement or person centered plan/child and family plan and to be available to give needed services and consultation concerning the child's welfare
 - Respect the foster parents' preferences in terms of sex, age range, and number of children placed in the home
 - Provide or arrange for training for the foster parents
 - Include foster parents as part of the decision-making team for a child
 - Allow foster parents to review and receive copies of their licensing record

2. Agency Rights

- a. To take whatever actions it determines are necessary to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of the children in foster care
- b. To work in partnership to continue to mutually assess the family's decision about providing foster care

C. Rights of Children in Foster Care. Children in foster care have a right to:

- a. Be treated as a member of the family

- b. Have clothing to wear that is appropriate to the weather
- c. Have personal property
- d. Be encouraged to express opinions on issues concerning care
- e. Be provided care in a manner that recognizes variations in cultural values and traditions
- f. Be provided the opportunity for spiritual development and is not denied the right to practice religious beliefs
- g. Not be identified in connection with the agency in any way that would bring the child or the child's family embarrassment
- h. Never be forced to acknowledge dependency on or gratitude to the foster parents
- i. Be encouraged to contact and have telephone conversations with family members, when not contraindicated in the child's visitation plan
- j. Be provided training and discipline that is appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experience
- k. Never be subjected to cruel, severe, or unusual punishment
- l. Never be subjected to corporal punishment
- m. Never be deprived of a meal or contacts with family for punishment or placed in isolation time-out except when isolation time-out means the removal of a child to a separate unlocked room or area from which the child is not physically prevented from leaving. The foster parent may use isolation time-out as a behavioral control measure when the foster parent provides it within hearing distance and sight of another foster parent. The length of time alone shall be appropriate to the child's age and development
- n. Never be subjected to verbal abuse, threats, or humiliating remarks about themselves or their families
- o. Be provided a daily routine in the home that promotes good mental health and provides an opportunity for normal activities with time for rest and play
- p. Be provided training in good health habits, including proper eating, frequent bathing, and good grooming. Each child shall be provided food with appropriate nutritional content for normal growth and health. Any diets recommended by a licensed medical provider shall be provided
- q. Be provided medical care in accordance with the treatment prescribed for the child
- r. Regular school attendance unless the child has been officially excused by the proper authorities (if the child is of school age)
- s. Be encouraged to participate in neighborhood and group activities, to have friends visit the home, and to visit in the homes of friends
- t. Assume some responsibility for himself and household duties in accordance with his age, health, and ability. Household tasks shall not interfere with school, sleep, play, or study periods
- u. Never do any task which is in violation of child labor laws or not appropriate for a child of that age

- v. Be provided supervision in accordance with the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experience
- w. Be properly secured in a child passenger restraint system which is of a type and which is installed in a manner approved by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles (if child is less than eight years of age or less than 80 pounds in weight)
- x. Be provided with information about resources available to them as a child in care (i.e., LINKS, membership in SAYSO)
- y. To be allowed appropriate contact with birth family, siblings, and extended family

K. INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH PROSPECTIVE FOSTER PARENTS

At a minimum, provide applicants with the following information:

1. The kinds of parental problems and situations that lead to placement.
2. Characteristics of children served by the agency, including positive traits and range of problems to be expected. In particular, applicants need information about the effects of separation and loss on children, such as low self-esteem, feeling isolated in their school and community, difficulty attaching to new people, and acting-out behaviorally.
3. The importance of continuity of care for children—the need to prevent changes in care whenever possible, and to avoid abrupt changes when replacement is necessary.
4. The varying lengths of time that children need placement.
5. Differences between family foster care and adoption.
6. Special characteristics of being a foster parent and the differences from natural parenthood in terms of both problems and rewards.
7. Agency responsibility for children in custody, agency goals and objectives, and the function and tasks performed by foster care workers in meeting that responsibility.
8. Agency policies and procedures regarding payments for
 - a. foster care maintenance
 - b. difficulty of care
 - c. respite
 - d. providing clothing, medical care, education, religious training

This should include specific, detailed information about financial payments between the agency and the foster parents.

9. Licensing standards that the foster family must meet.
10. Agency responsibility for preparing a mutual home assessment, and making a recommendation on licensure to the state Licensing Authority. Workers should explain all the steps in the mutual home assessment and application process to applicants. Applicants also need to know that some information submitted for a license is public record and can be accessed by others according to state law (G.S. 131D 10.6c).
11. In particular, applicants need to know of the agency's responsibility for conducting checks for criminal records and for substantiated abuse or neglect.

L. FINGERPRINTING FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

APPLICANT		LEAVE BLANK		TYPE OR PRINT ALL INFORMATION IN BLACK		FBI LEAVE BLANK	
SIGNATURE OF PERSON FINGERPRINTED		LAST NAME <u>NAM</u>		FIRST NAME		MIDDLE NAME	
RESIDENCE OF PERSON FINGERPRINTED		ALIASES <u>AKA</u>		OR I		DATE OF BIRTH <u>DOB</u>	
DATE		CITIZENSHIP <u>CTZ</u>		SEX <u>MALE</u>		PLACE OF BIRTH <u>POB</u>	
SIGNATURE OF OFFICIAL TAKING FINGERPRINTS		YOUR NO. <u>OCA</u>		FBI NO. <u>FBI</u>		CLASS	
EMPLOYER AND ADDRESS DHR/DSS CHILDREN'S SERVICES 325 N. SALISBURY STREET RALEIGH, NC 27603		ARMED FORCES NO. <u>MNU</u>		SOCIAL SECURITY NO. <u>SOC</u>		MISCELLANEOUS NO. <u>MNU</u>	
FOSTER PARENT N.C.G.S. 131D-10.3A		MISCELLANEOUS NO. <u>MNU</u>		MISCELLANEOUS NO. <u>MNU</u>		MISCELLANEOUS NO. <u>MNU</u>	
1. R. THUMB		2. R. INDEX		3. R. MIDDLE		4. R. RING	
5. R. LITTLE		6. L. THUMB		7. L. INDEX		8. L. MIDDLE	
9. L. RING		10. L. LITTLE		11. L. THUMB		12. L. INDEX	
13. L. MIDDLE		14. L. RING		15. L. LITTLE		16. L. THUMB	
LEFT FOUR FINGERS TAKEN SIMULTANEOUSLY		RIGHT FOUR FINGERS TAKEN SIMULTANEOUSLY		LEFT FOUR FINGERS TAKEN SIMULTANEOUSLY		RIGHT FOUR FINGERS TAKEN SIMULTANEOUSLY	

Sample

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON, D.C. 20537 APPLICANT	
<p>1. LOOP</p> <p>THE LINES BETWEEN CENTER OF LOOP AND DELTA MUST SHOW</p>	<p>TO OBTAIN CLASSIFIABLE FINGERPRINTS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. USE BLACK PRINTER'S INK. 2. DISTRIBUTE INK EVENLY ON INKING SLAB. 3. WASH AND DRY FINGERS THOROUGHLY. 4. ROLL FINGERS FROM NAIL TO NAIL, AND AVOID ALLOWING FINGERS TO SLIP. 5. BE SURE IMPRESSIONS ARE RECORDED IN CORRECT ORDER. 6. IF AN AMPUTATION OR DEFORMITY MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PRINT A FINGER, MAKE A NOTATION TO THAT EFFECT IN THE INDIVIDUAL FINGER BLOCK. 7. IF SOME PHYSICAL CONDITION MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN PERFECT IMPRESSIONS, SUBMIT THE BEST THAT CAN BE OBTAINED WITH A MEMO STAPLED TO THE CARD EXPLAINING THE CIRCUMSTANCES. 8. EXAMINE THE COMPLETED PRINTS TO SEE IF THEY CAN BE CLASSIFIED, BEARING IN MIND THAT MOST FINGERPRINTS FAIL INTO THE PATTERNS SHOWN ON THIS CARD (OTHER PATTERNS OCCUR INFREQUENTLY AND ARE NOT SHOWN HERE).
<p>2. WHORL</p> <p>THESE LINES RUNNING BETWEEN DELTAS MUST BE CLEAR</p>	<p>THIS CARD FOR USE BY:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN FINGERPRINTING APPLICANTS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT PURPOSES. 2. OFFICIALS OF STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR PURPOSES OF EMPLOYMENT, LICENSING, AND PERMITS, AS AUTHORIZED BY STATE STATUTES AND APPROVED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES, LOCAL AND COUNTY OFFICIALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY BASED ON APPLICABLE STATE STATUTE DO NOT SATISFY THIS REQUIREMENT. 3. U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER ENTITIES REQUIRED BY FEDERAL LAW. 4. OFFICIALS OF FEDERALLY CHARTERED OR INSURED BANKS, INSTITUTIONS TO PROMOTE OR MAINTAIN THE SECURITY OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS.
<p>3. ARCH</p> <p>ARCHES HAVE NO DELTAS</p>	<p>LEAVE THIS SPACE BLANK</p>
<p>INSTRUCTIONS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PRINTS MUST FIRST BE CHECKED THROUGH THE APPROPRIATE STATE IDENTIFICATION BUREAU, AND ONLY THOSE FINGERPRINTS FOR WHICH NO DISQUALIFYING RECORD HAS BEEN FOUND LOCALLY SHOULD BE SUBMITTED FOR FBI SEARCH. 2. PRIVACY ACT OF 1974 (P.L. 93-579) REQUIRES THAT FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL AGENCIES INFORM INDIVIDUALS WHOSE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER IS REQUESTED WHETHER SUCH DISCLOSURE IS MANDATORY OR VOLUNTARY, BASIS OF AUTHORITY FOR SUCH SOLICITATION, AND USES WHICH WILL BE MADE OF IT. 3. IDENTITY OF PRIVATE CONTRACTORS SHOULD BE SHOWN IN SPACE "EMPLOYER AND ADDRESS". THE CONTRIBUTOR IS THE NAME OF THE AGENCY SUBMITTING THE FINGERPRINT CARD TO THE FBI. 4. FBI NUMBER, IF KNOWN, SHOULD ALWAYS BE FURNISHED IN THE APPROPRIATE SPACE. <p>MISCELLANEOUS NO. - RECORD OTHER ARMED FORCES NO., PASSPORT NO. (PN), ALIEN REGISTRATION NO. (AR), PORT SECURITY CARD NO. (PS), SELECTIVE SERVICE NO. (SS), VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION CLAIM NO. (VA).</p>	
<p>FD-258 (REV. 12-28-82)</p> <p>U.S. GPO: 1998 450-177/80109</p>	

Instructions for Completing Fingerprint Card

1. The complete name of the subject is to be listed as indicated: last name, first name, and middle name. Please make certain that the name is spelled correctly because many times the signature is illegible.
2. List any and all alias names or nicknames, maiden name or any other married names.
3. List the date of birth numerically – month, day, and year. If the subject's date of birth is not available, please list approximate age. Example: May 11, 1948 = 051148
4. Indicate American citizenship by US. If the subject is not a citizen, indicate nationality.
5. Sex is to be listed as M for male, F for female
6. Race is to be listed by placing an individual in one (1) of the following categories by writing the appropriate letter in the space provided.
 - W – White
 - B – Black
 - I – American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - A – Asian or Pacific Islander
 - U – Unknown or if unsure or unable to determine
7. Indicate the subject's height in feet and inches using all numbers
Example: 6'01" = 601; 6'11" = 611; 6' = 600
8. Indicate the subject's weight in pounds using all numbers
Example: 186 or 098, etc.
9. List the subject's eye color by placing one (1) of the following eye color codes in the space provided:

BLK - Black	GRY - Gray	MAR - Maroon
BLU - Blue	GRN - Green	PNK - Pink
BRO - Brown	HAZ - Hazel	XXX - unknown
10. Color of hair should be indicated by writing one (1) of the following color codes in the space provided:
BAL – Bald, BLK – Black, BLN – Blonde or Strawberry, BRO – Brown, GRY – Gray or partially gray, RED – Red or Auburn, SDY - Sandy
11. Indicate, if possible, the city and state where the subject was born. The state should be indicated by a two digit abbreviation. Example: South Carolina – SC, California - CA
12. If the social security number is known, write the number in this space. The social security number is a very important identifier.
13. The signature of the person being fingerprinted should appear in this space. If the subject is not able to sign, indicate this by noting "Not Able to Sign"
14. Complete current residence of subject fingerprinted is written here.
15. The date the fingerprints were taken.
16. The individual who actually took the fingerprints should sign his/her name in this space.
17. The prospective employer's (hiring agency) name and address MUST BE indicated here. DO NOT indicate where the applicant is currently employed, unless it is the same agency he is applying with.
18. Indicate the reason the subject was fingerprinted: (Foster Parent N.C.G.S. 131D-10.3A, School Applicant, Nursing Home, Mental Health Agency Applicant, Nursing Home Applicant, etc.)
19. Rolled fingerprint impressions are taken in these (10) blocks. Fingerprint impressions should always include the complete first joint to be rolled nail to nail. Indicate amputations, mutilations, or missing at birth fingers in the correct fingerprint block.
20. The two (2) thumb prints and eight (8) fingerprint impressions are taken at the bottom of the card in this area. These should be "plain impressions"

Note: Applicant fingerprint cards are provided by: NC DHHS Criminal Record Check Unit/DSS, 2201 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2201 phone number: 800-859-0829 or 919-773-2856

8 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;"> <div style="text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">COUNTY OF RESIDENCE</div> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>4</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>6</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>7</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>8</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>9</td><td>9</td></tr> </table> <div style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;">County code must correspond to current residence address.</div> </div>	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	8	9	9	9	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> 20 Out of State 01 Alamance 02 Alexander 03 Alleghany 04 Anson 05 Ashe 06 Avery 07 Beaufort 08 Bertie 09 Bladen 10 Brunswick 11 Buncombe 12 Burke 13 Cabarrus 14 Caldwell 15 Camden 16 Carteret 17 Caswell 18 Catawba 19 Chatham 20 Cherokee </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> 21 Chowan 22 Clay 23 Cleveland 24 Columbus 25 Craven 26 Cumberland 27 Currituck 28 Dare 29 Davidson 30 Davie 31 Duplin 32 Durham 33 Edgecombe 34 Forsyth 35 Franklin 36 Gaston 37 Gates 38 Graham 39 Granville 40 Greene </td> </tr> </table>	20 Out of State 01 Alamance 02 Alexander 03 Alleghany 04 Anson 05 Ashe 06 Avery 07 Beaufort 08 Bertie 09 Bladen 10 Brunswick 11 Buncombe 12 Burke 13 Cabarrus 14 Caldwell 15 Camden 16 Carteret 17 Caswell 18 Catawba 19 Chatham 20 Cherokee	21 Chowan 22 Clay 23 Cleveland 24 Columbus 25 Craven 26 Cumberland 27 Currituck 28 Dare 29 Davidson 30 Davie 31 Duplin 32 Durham 33 Edgecombe 34 Forsyth 35 Franklin 36 Gaston 37 Gates 38 Graham 39 Granville 40 Greene	COUNTIES <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> 41 Guilford 42 Halifax 43 Harnett 44 Haywood 45 Henderson 46 Hertford 47 Hoke 48 Hyde 49 Iredell 50 Jackson 51 Johnston 52 Jones 53 Lee 54 Lenoir 55 Lincoln 56 Macon 57 Madison 58 Martin 59 McDowell 60 Mecklenburg </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> 61 Mitchell 62 Montgomery 63 Moore 64 Nash 65 New Hanover 66 Northampton 67 Onslow 68 Orange 69 Pamlico 70 Pasquotank 71 Pender 72 Perquimans 73 Person 74 Pitt 75 Polk 76 Randolph 77 Richmond 78 Robeson 79 Rockingham 80 Rowan </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> 81 Rutherford 82 Sampson 83 Scotland 84 Stanly 85 Stokes 86 Surry 87 Swain 88 Transylvania 89 Tyrrell 90 Union 91 Vance 92 Wake 93 Warren 94 Washington 95 Watauga 96 Wayne 97 Wilkes 98 Wilson 99 Yadkin 100 Yancey </td> </tr> </table>	41 Guilford 42 Halifax 43 Harnett 44 Haywood 45 Henderson 46 Hertford 47 Hoke 48 Hyde 49 Iredell 50 Jackson 51 Johnston 52 Jones 53 Lee 54 Lenoir 55 Lincoln 56 Macon 57 Madison 58 Martin 59 McDowell 60 Mecklenburg	61 Mitchell 62 Montgomery 63 Moore 64 Nash 65 New Hanover 66 Northampton 67 Onslow 68 Orange 69 Pamlico 70 Pasquotank 71 Pender 72 Perquimans 73 Person 74 Pitt 75 Polk 76 Randolph 77 Richmond 78 Robeson 79 Rockingham 80 Rowan	81 Rutherford 82 Sampson 83 Scotland 84 Stanly 85 Stokes 86 Surry 87 Swain 88 Transylvania 89 Tyrrell 90 Union 91 Vance 92 Wake 93 Warren 94 Washington 95 Watauga 96 Wayne 97 Wilkes 98 Wilson 99 Yadkin 100 Yancey
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12

NAME OF SUPERVISORY AGENCY AND MAILING ADDRESS

(Area Code)
 TELEPHONE #

AUTHORITY FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION (State and Federal Record Check)

I authorize the North Carolina Department of Justice through the State Bureau of Investigation, Special Operations Division to perform a fingerprint search of the State's criminal history record file and/or the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a national criminal history record check in connection with my fitness to be an adoptive/foster parent licensed by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Social Services (DSS) pursuant to NCGS 114-19.7 and 48-3-309/114-19.4 and 131D-10.3A.

I understand that the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, Special Operations Division and its officials and employees shall not be held legally accountable in any way for providing this information to the DHHS Criminal Record Check Unit and I hereby release said agency and persons from any and all liability which may be incurred as a result of furnishing such information. I further understand that DHHS cannot release the results of this criminal history record check to me.

* Disclosure of social security number is entirely voluntary and not required. If disclosed, the social security number will be utilized to assist with accurate identification/exclusion of possible criminal history records.

Applicant's Signature (Person fingerprinted must sign in INK)

Date Signed

Mark Reflex® forms by NCS Pearson EM-262850-1:65432 HR06 Printed in U.S.A.



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK UNIT

319 Chapanoke Road • 2201 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, NC 27699-2201

Tel: (919)773-2856 • Fax: (919)661-6167 • Email: DHHS.CRC.UNIT@ncmail.net

Michael F. Easley, Governor • Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary

February 6, 2006

To: County Directors of Social Services
Private Child Placing Agencies

Attn: Foster Care and Adoption Program Managers and Supervisors

From: Melynda Swindells, Manager
Department of Health and Human Services Criminal Record Check Unit (DHHS CRC)

Subject: New Release Forms for Adoptive and Foster Parents

Effective: **Upon Receipt of Bubble Sheets**

Since House Bill 1414 in the 2004 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly directed DHHS to "*centralize all activities throughout the Department relating to the coordination and processing of criminal record checks required by law*", the DHHS CRC Unit has been working on centralizing the processing of all records checks for the Division of Social Services, Division of Child Development, Division of Facility Services, and the Division of Medical Assistance.

Our first project was to streamline and assimilate the different release forms and data entry processes for each of the programs supported by the DHHS CRC Unit. Upon receipt of the new forms, please have all prospective foster and adoptive parents complete the entire bubble sheet, including signing the SBI/FBI release located on the back of the form. A completed fingerprint card and the new bubble sheet are the two required pieces of paperwork to be submitted to the DHHS CRC Unit for processing. Please discontinue using the SBI/FBI release form that was previously required to be submitted. **The new bubble sheet will be replacing the old release form.**

The bubble sheet will be scanned into the database and will be kept on file at the DHHS CRC Unit for one year after receipt. Please inform prospective foster and adoptive parents that the bubble form must be filled out completely and accurately with a #2 pencil and the release form must signed in ink or it will be returned unprocessed. We expect this will expedite the processing time and because the form is scanned into the database, it also will provide for real-time data that can be made available to your agency upon request.

You will be receiving packets of the new bubble sheets for use by your agency. Please begin using them immediately upon receipt. We will be sending each agency a few months supply of forms at first and additional forms will be mailed to agencies upon request.

We currently have a turnaround time of approximately two weeks, which includes the SBI/FBI processing time. Should you be waiting on fingerprint results for more than 3 weeks or have any questions, please contact the unit at (919)773-2856 or (800)859-0829 or email us at DHHS.CRC.UNIT@ncmail.net to inquire about the status of fingerprints or to request additional bubble sheet forms.

DSS/Adoptive and Foster Parents

2/06

Department of Health and Human Services
Criminal Record Check Unit
 (DHHS CRC Unit)
Bubble Sheet w/ SBI Release Instruction Sheet

The instruction sheet outlines the proper procedures for completing the new bubble sheet with SBI release form (DHHS-001) that is now required to be completed by all potential adoptive and foster parent applicants requesting to have a criminal record check completed. The bubble sheet with release is required for all applicants, including those applicants from local DSS agencies, private placing agencies, household members as well as applicants submitting fingerprints electronically. The bubble sheet will replace the old SBI release form previously used and it will be kept on file at the DHHS CRC Unit for one year from date of receipt.

The bubble form should be filled out correctly and completely with a **#2 pencil**. Ovals should be completely shaded in, NOT checked, "x" through, dotted or partially shaded.

- Box 1:** Last and first legal names of the applicant
- No nicknames or middle names used as first names
- Box 2:** Social security number of the applicant
- *SBI regulations mandate that the word 'optional' be added to any form requesting a social security number; however, it is not optional for the purpose of completing checks through the DHHS CRC Unit. If the SSN is left off, it will be pulled from the card and added by Unit staff.
- Box 3:** Date of birth of the applicant
- Box 4:** Gender of the applicant (statistical purposes only)
- Box 5:** Race of the applicant (statistical purposes only)
- Box 6:** **FOR DHHS USE ONLY - - DO NOT COMPLETE**
- Box 7:** Mailing address of the applicant
- Space is provided for applicants to list all previously used names, including maiden names.
 - Additional space is also provided for mailing addresses that require more space than allotted or the physical address if different than the mailing address.
- Box 8:** County of residence of the applicant
- i.e. Wake County would be shown as 092
- Box 9:** Type of parent the applicant is applying for
- Box 10:** Classification of applicant
- Box 11:** Indicate whether or not applicant has lived in NC for the past 5 years in a row.
- Box 12:** Name, mailing address and telephone number of supervisory agency

The SBI release should be signed by the applicant in ink. This form should not be folded, torn or mutilated in any way or it will be returned unprocessed. The completed bubble sheet form and fingerprint card should be submitted for processing to the following address:

DHHS Criminal Record Check Unit/DSS
 2201 Mail Service Center
 Raleigh, NC 27699-2201

Questions?? Contact the unit at (800)859-0829 or (919)773-2856 or
 DHHS.CRC.UNIT@ncmail.net

H:/DSS Bubble Sheet Instructions.doc

N. GUIDELINES FOR SEXUAL SAFETY PLANS FOR FOSTER FAMILIES

For any foster family, developing a safety plan together can enhance communication and the sense of security for every member of the family. In families where a child has been sexually abused, or in particular where a child is acting out sexually, a safety plan is vital. And since we are not always aware of a child's full history at placement, the best practice is to proactively address boundary and safety issues. As a licensing professional, you can educate families and colleagues about this critical piece of maintaining safe placements.



As a licensing professional, you can educate families and colleagues about this critical piece of ensuring foster care placements are safe.

To begin, it's important to keep in mind a few notes of caution. Of course, no agreement can guarantee safety, or replace vigilant supervision and communication. In addition, families should develop their plans in partnership with their licensing and foster care workers, as well as any therapists or other significant professionals in the children's lives.

Rather than using a cookie-cutter approach, each plan should be individualized and tailored to the specific strengths and needs of the family. Most importantly, the plan should never be completed and presented by professionals as a "done deal." Instead, children and foster parents need to actively participate in suggesting, developing, and agreeing to the rules for their family. Parents, children, and workers should all sign and date the plan, and it should periodically be reviewed and updated as needed.

General Safety Plans for Families

Here are some categories families and workers should consider when devising a general safety plan, along with examples of rules for each category. This is not a complete list and offers only some of the areas to cover in a safety plan.

Touching Rules:

- There is to be no sexual contact or sexual touching between children in this family or between parents and children in this family.
- I understand there will be no sexual play or sexual touching, including playing doctor, house, or things like that.
- I understand that my body belongs to me and if anyone touches me in a sexual way or in a way that makes me feel uncomfortable or scared I will say "no," and I will tell someone. Here are the people I can tell:

- I understand that all physical touching between family members will be safe. Touching that feels okay to me is:

(Beware of tickling, wrestling, back rubs, foot rubs, horseplay. None of these behaviors should be behind closed doors.)

- If I want to touch my privates I must be in the bedroom or bathroom with the door closed. I won't hurt myself and no one else should know about it at the time.

Clothes and Privacy Rules:

- Undressing is allowed only in bedrooms or bathrooms with doors closed.
- Everyone will dress appropriately around the house. This includes a robe or clothes or pajamas over underwear.
- Only one person can be in the bathroom at a time and the door will be closed.

Bedroom Rules:

- No kids can go into any bedrooms without permission from the adults.
- Anytime anyone is in someone else's bedroom with permission from the adults the door must be open.
- Everyone will sleep in his or her own bed. No one except me will sleep in my bedroom.

Safety Plans for Children Who Have Acted Out or Offended

For children or youth who have acted out sexually or abused others, a social worker or therapist trained to work with this population should always be involved in developing the safety plan. In these cases, the rules need to be even more specific, and of course include much higher levels of supervision. Here are a few examples of specific rules that might be included:



If children have sexually acted out, a social worker or therapist trained to work with this population should always help develop the safety plan.

- Hugs will be asked for and an opportunity to accept or reject hugs will be given.
- No picking up, sitting on laps, wrestling, or tickling of other children will be allowed.
- I will have my own separate bedroom in the home, and will sleep alone in my bed.
- I will remain in designated areas within eye sight of my parents at all times when around other children.
- TV, movies, music, and video games will be monitored for violent or sexual content.
- I will be alone in the bathroom at school or have a teacher present if other children are in bathroom.

Source: adapted with permission from Professional Parenting, a program of Appalachian Family Innovations

O. FAMILY-FRIENDLY CHECKLIST FOR RELICENSING

Special thanks to Buncombe County DSS's Heather Hill-Pavone for developing the prototype of this form. Agencies should feel free to customize/adapt this form as they see fit for use with their families.

Renewing Your License.....



- ☐ **Physical Form completed for everyone**
(Not needed for foster children)
(TB test only needed on children turning 18 yo who have not had a TB test and for any new adult household members)
- ☐ **Fire Safety Inspection completed**
- ☐ Agency Agreement reviewed, signed, a copy retained
- ☐ Discipline Policy reviewed, signed, and a copy retained
- ☐ Training log completed for each foster parent
remember 20 hours are required over the span of the two year licensure period!
- ☐ Home visit scheduled to collect and complete remaining paperwork!

Please make sure to have all of your paperwork completed by the dates on your renewal reminder cover letter! If you have any questions about any of the documents above please don't hesitate to contact me!

Licensing Social Worker: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Email: _____

P. THANK YOU TO FOSTER PARENTS

by Lynn Davis

Thank you for all the times you've said "yes" during the day and in the middle of the night.

Thank you for taking children who come with nothing but their teary faces and outstretched hands.

Thank you for saying "yes" when you've told us you need a break and we call you two days later.

Thank you for being patient when we've forgotten to call you about court dates and rescheduled visits.

Thank you for holding and comforting children who are upset because their parents miss a visit or court gets continued one more time.

Thank you for meeting birth and adoptive families, sharing your insights, and agreeing to have them visit in your home.

Thank you for advocating for your children and helping us to advocate for them in our community.

Thank you for your participation in training and becoming stronger, more effective foster parents.

Thank you for "hanging in there" with children when the urge to call us to remove them is so strong.

Thank you for remaining a foster parent when your heart is saddened from saying good-bye to a child.

Thank you for all the little things you do that make a placement in your home so special.

Thank you for all the good you do--it will last a lifetime.

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